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THE IRONSIDES

BY

Arthur Paterson and

Charles Cartwright





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THE IRONSIDES



CHARACTERS :

LORD WILLOUGHBY OF PARHAM, Sergeant Major General Commanding the Parliamentary Forces in Lincolnshire.

COL. FAIRWEATHER, } Of the Parlia-
COL. STRICKLAND, } mentarian
COL. BROCKLEHURST, } Army.

CAPTAIN CAPELL.

LIEUTENANT RALF DANGERFIELD.

SERGEANT.

MICKLEJOHN, Corporal.

SANCTIFY JORDAN, Trooper.

MAKEPEACE, Trooper.

GOODCHILD, Trooper.

REV. ISAAC HEPWORTH.

JOHN CLAYPOLE.

VISCOUNT CHARLTON, Royalist Officer.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

MADAM CROMWELL.

BETTY CROMWELL.

PHOEBE.

RACHEL FULLERTON.

ACTS I. AND II.—Cromwell's House at Ely.

ACT III.—Stainsby House, Royalist Stronghold.

ACT IV.—Cromwell's House.

The Ironsides

ACT I.

SCENE—Entrance Hall, Cromwell's House,
Ely. Time—Morning.

Madam Cromwell and Betty discovered.
Phoebe, Sanctify Jordan and another
maid servant.

BETTY (Reading from family Bible):
The transgressors shall be destroyed alto-
gether, and the wicked shall be cut off.
(Closes book.)

(Servants rise.)

MADAM C: The Lord grant it may be
soon and the war end. Phoebe, go thou to
the window. The regiment should be in
sight.

PHOEBE: They are not coming yet,
Madam.

(Exit Phoebe, Sanctify and maid.)

MADAM C: I trust there hath been no
mishap. Repeat to me, child, the news the
Corporal gave thee.

BETTY: He said the Malignants were in
strong force, and disputed stubbornly.
Father's horse was killed and he was in
great peril, but Lieutenant Dangerfield
charged so fiercely with the first troop that
he drove the enemy before him in confusion,
saved father's life, and won the day.

MADAM C: A gallant youth, a worthy
youth. Well deserving of his name.

BETTY: Dost know him, Granny?

MADAM C: I have not seen him since he
was an infant. But his grandfather, who
commanded one of Queen Elizabeth's best
ships of war, was a dear friend of mine. I

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was then a maid. It was long ago—long, long ago. (Sighs.) But I desire to see this youth. Is he comely, tall and gallant? His grandfather was the handsomest man that I have ever seen. Describe his appearance, pussy.

(Enter Rachel R.)

BETTY: Indeed, Granny, Rachel will do that the best.

MADAM C: (Kissing Rachel.) Thou art late, my girlie.

RACHEL: Forgive me, dearest Madam, one of the maids is sick.

MADAM C: And thou hast done her work? Answer not; I know thine unselfish ways. I desire thee tell me of this youth, Ralf Dangerfield. What is he like?

RACHEL: I have but spoken to him in ordinary greeting.

BETTY: Fie, oh fie!

RACHEL: You are a mischief. Granny, take no heed of her.

MADAM C: Come, Betty, then. Thou describe him.

BETTY: He is of rude and awkward bearing.

RACHEL: How can you say so? He is a most courteous gentleman.

BETTY: He is ugly, and one eye, methinks, hath a decided cast.

RACHEL: Madam, this is a hoax. She should be soundly shaken.

BETTY: (Laughing.) Did I not declare you knew him best? See, Granny, naught I say can please her.

MADAM C: Impudent baggage. Have a care or I shall take thy chastisement in hand myself. Now, Rachel, give me his likeness in all seriousness. You had many opportunities of seeing him, for if I mistake not he was here when I was away in London. (Aside.) Methinks it was high time I should return.

RACHEL: He is tall and handsome, with

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dark hair, worn longer than is the custom hereabouts, and a high carriage of the head; indeed, he is different from any gentleman I know.

BETTY: Oh, yes! (Laughs.)

MADAM C: (With mock sternness.) Elizabeth! Your description, Rachel, mindeth me not a little of his grandfather. The Admiral Dangerfield was very proud.

RACHEL: I fear the Lieutenant may be. When the Captain Capell or my Uncle Hepworth speaks to him his face groweth stern and hard. Doth it not, Betty?

BETTY: Aye—he bites them. I like him for it, dear.

MADAM C: For shame, thou chit. Then thy Reverend Uncle, Rachel, loves not the Lieutenant?

RACHEL: My uncle saith Master Dangerfield has lax opinions on religion. He threatens to question him upon his faith.

MADAM C: The reverend gentleman must have a care, a Dangerfield brooks not overmuch authority. How doth the Captain like the gallant?

BETTY: He is jealous of him.

RACHEL: Why should he be jealous?

BETTY: (Laughs.) Why indeed? Dear Granny, dost not guess?

MADAM C: Thou art a wicked child.

RACHEL: Your mischief is beyond all patience. (Moves C. to window.)

BETTY: Nay, but I speak the truth. I watch his eyes when he is near you, and I long to scratch them out.

RACHEL: Quick—the door.

(Bell rings.)

BETTY: It is father. (Runs to door C.)

(Enter Claypole.)

What? You?

CLAY: Aye! I have rid full twenty miles.

BETTY: What for?

CLAY: To see you, Mistress.

BETTY: Then you may ride home again.

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I thought it was my father, and—and (Spitefully to Rachel.) Lieutenant Dangerfield.

CLAY: (Comes down to Madam C.) Your servant, dear Madam.

MADAM C: A greeting, John. How is your worthy father?

CLAY: In sound health, Madam, but sore depressed at the condition of affairs.

BETTY: You do not seem depressed.

CLAY: In your presence, Mistress, I could not be.

BETTY: (Aside.) I will depress him. (Aloud.) Not when I say I will have naught to do with you; that I despise you; that I desire never to see your face again.

CLAY: What have I done to be treated so?

BETTY: It is not what you do; 'tis what you do not do.

CLAY: Tell me what I fail in, Mistress, and I will straightaway do it—I mean I will not do it—I mean—I will do whatever you desire.

BETTY: I desire that you be a man.

CLAY: I am a man.

BETTY: You, who sit at home, while all with any spirit go forth and wield the sword. You a man, indeed!

CLAY: Wouldst have me go to war? Dost wish that I should die?

BETTY: I'd have you be a man, I say. (Goes to window L. C.) (Clay follows. Rachel returns to Madam C. Enter Hepworth, R. C.)

MADAM C: A greeting, reverend sir. We are awaiting the arrival of my son.

HEP: I desire his presence urgently.

MADAM C: You seem in trouble.

HEP: My mind is sore distressed.

MADAM C: Then clear thy brow, for a victory hath been won at small cost of godly lives.

HEP: Better that lives be lost than souls. I hear that Lieutenant Dangerfield still liveth.

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MADAM C: The Lord be praised for that.

HEP: I have discovered that he is an Atheist; he must be dismissed the troop.

MADAM C: He will be an honoured guest to-day.

HEP: Then, Rachel, thou wilt leave this house.

RACHEL: Uncle, I cannot.

MADAM C: That is a matter for the Colonel to decide.

HEP: I am her uncle and her guardian.

MADAM C: My son also is her guardian.

HEP: I represent the Parliament.

MADAM C: This is my son's house, not the Parliament's.

HEP: Would he cherish a viper in his bosom?

MADAM C: We will cherish whom we choose, and dispute with whom we choose.

HEP: By what excuse can he extend his favour to an infidel?

MADAM C: That, sir, is his affair. It is not thine.

HEP: Then I depart forthwith. Rachel, place thyself in immediate readiness.

RACHEL: You would not take me from my dearest friends?

HEP: Thou wilt obey me, girl. To thy chamber without another word.

(Rachel rises to obey.)

BETTY: Hark! they come, they come. (At window.)

(Tramp of horses heard off. Helmets seen through windows at back of stage. Servants come in L. C. and then open door. Cromwell's voice heard off.)

CROM: Halt! Six men fall out and attend the prisoner. The rest to quarters. (Pause.) March!

(Tramp of men moving away. Enter Cromwell.)

Thy blessing, dearest mother. (Kneels.)

MADAM C: May the Lord be thanked for His great mercy in bringing thee safe home.

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CROM: Amen. (Rises.) Now, Kitten, thine embrace. (Catches up Betty and kisses her. Rachel kisses his hand. He places one hand on her shoulder and turns to Hepworth.)

(Enter Capell behind.)

Thy greeting, friend. We have been greatly blessed.

HEP: I trust you will deserve the mercy.

CROM: It will be my endeavour. Capell, where is thy prisoner?

CAPELL: Without, Colonel.

CROM: Tush! You should not leave him there. He is weary and requires refreshment. Bring him in.

(Exit Capell C.)

MADAM C: Whom have ye taken, son?

CROM: One Viscount Charlton. A brave gentleman, though a Papist. He 's a Captain in Prince Rupert's Guards. I desire he receive all courtesy and kindness at our hands.

BETTY: (Who has been to the door and has whispered something to Rachel with a shake of the head.) Father, where is Lieutenant Dangerfield?

HEP: (Aside.) Can it be that he hath fallen?

CROM: He will be here presently. I sent him in search Brampton Grange at Milton, where 'tis said there is concealed a store of arms and treasure for the King.

(Enter Capell, followed by Charlton, guarded by two dragoons.)

My Lord, welcome to my poor house. Mother, the Viscount Charlton, our—guest.

CHARL: (Bowing to Madam C. and then to Rachel and Betty.) Ladies, your very humble servant. Gad, Colonel, I like the title—guest. It smacketh so o' hospitality. Are these fair damosels your daughters?

HEP: A shameless ruffler.

CROM: (Looking at Hepworth grimly.) I will present them, my Lord. Th's is my

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daughter Elizabeth; this my ward, Mistress Rachel Fullerton.

CHARL: (Bowing low, to which the girls respond with deep curtseys.) I called myself a guest. Upon my life, fair ladies, I am a captive, held prisoner by your charms.

HEP: A godless libertine.

CHARL: (Turning upon him.) Does the reverend minister address that word to me?

HEP: (Raising his hand.) Aye, and I denounce thee, Malignant.

CROM: Silence, Presbyter. Nay (As Hep tries to speak again.) Not another word. His Lordship is my guest, though an unwilling one. My Lord, our maidens are not used to compliments. We are plain dealing folk, and take a speaker at his word.

CHARL: Pardon, kind host. Yet i' faith, I spoke in earnest. I have seen the reigning beauties of the Court—the Queen herself, God bless her!—but I swear none surpass in charms these maidens here.

BETTY: (Laughs.) We thank you kindly, sir—my Lord, I mean.

(Hepworth groans.)

CROM: (Laughing.) A truce, my Lord, or you will turn their heads. Alas, this is no time for pretty pleasantries. I must to duty, you unto your chamber, whither refreshment shall be brought you. See to this, Capell. I entrust his Lordship to your care. Mother, I pray you direct the Captain where to lodge our guest. I shall be in my library a space. Send all despatches thither.

(Exit L.)

(Madam Cromwell and Capell converse.)

CHARL: (Aside.) Capell—my gaoler! Truly I am a most unlucky dog. Capell—whom I soundly thrashed at Cambridge in our student days, for cheating. He remembers it, and now will pay the score.

CAPELL: It shall be done, Madam. This way my Lord. Attend us, men.

(Goes up stairs C. Charlton follows, paus-

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ing at foot of staircase to bow to Betty and Rachel and Madam C.)

(Exeunt Capell, Charlton and Dragoons.)

HEP: Madam, dost thou countenance that debauchee?

MADAM C: In my presence, sir, such a word is an offence.

HEP: I am a minister of Gospel, and speak as my conscience prompts me.

MADAM C: (Rising.) There is something else but conscience that should be thought on by a man when he addresses women.

HEP: What does any Christian need but truth?

MADAM C: Good manners, sir.

(Exit R. C.)

HEP: (Aside.) A woman with a shrewdly biting tongue. I shall avoid much converse with her in the future. Now, to speak my mind to Cromwell.

(Exit L.)

(Claypole, Betty and Rachel come down. They have been conversing with troopers that at intervals pass through hall from door C. to door L. with despatches and return.)

BETTY: What a splendid gentleman 's that Viscount! Such elegance! Such courtesy! Such a presence!

CLAY: He is a desperate rake; a rank Papist, and a roystering cavalier.

BETTY: (Clasping her hands and laughing aside.) I love cavaliers, Master Claypole.

CLAY: You will now have a pair of them.

RACHEL: A pair--who is the other?

CLAY: Why, Master Lieutenant Dangerfield.

RACHEL: Sir, be careful what you say. You should not call one of our officers by such a name, even 'n joke.

BETTY: (Laughing.) Oh, foolish man. What have you done? Your friend who so oft hath protected you from me is now

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your enemy forever. Retreat, lest a worse thing happen. But, Rachel, I do believe he's right. I have often thought the Lieutenant looked a cavalier.

CLAY: I can prove he is one. This Viscount is his friend.

BETTY and RACHEL: (Together.) His friend?

CLAY: His dearest friend. They were at college, sworn companions. They fought in Holland, side by side. Nay, they only parted company a week before the war broke out.

RACHEL: It will grieve the Lieutenant to find his friend a prisoner.

CLAY: Harder still for my Lord to be prisoner to Capell.

BETTY: Is he another friend?

CLAY: A bitter enemy—who will take revenge.

RACHEL: You wrong him. He is a godly man.

BETTY: He saith too many prayers.

RACHEL: Shame on you—I have heard your father much commend him for his piety.

BETTY: Father's religion is his life, and he believes the same of other men who pray—until he finds them out. This Captain hath a religion and a God—but that's himself.

RACHEL: You do him sore injustice.

BETTY: I hate him. You do not, because to you he showeth but one side. But now I must go about my business. Master Clay-pole, hast done any work to-day?

CLAY: I have rid—far.

BETTY: That is not work. Show me your hands. Look, Rachel, they are white as yours or mine. Yet he calls himself a man. Come and do some work for me. (Moves R.)

CLAY: (Following—sighs.) I would do anything for thee.

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BETTY: I will keep you to your word. There is some digging in the garden too heavy for my strength and oh, so dirty! You shall do it until dinner time.

(Claypole groans. Betty laughs.)

(Both Exit R.)

(Rachel moves up to window R. C. as Hepworth enters L. and comes down.)

HEP: (Aside.) I am flouted—scorned. My word is set at naught. Rachel disobedient! Cromwell insults me. The cause of it that son of Satan, Dangerfield. All love him—even Cromwell—Cromwell! He is an enemy unto the true religion. He is all for liberty of sects and toleration. Surely Providence guided my steps into his library when he was absent, and led me to read that letter to his cousin St. John. A letter full of slander and abuse against Lord Willoughby, the Commander of our army. I have but to get that letter in my hands, dispatch it to my Lord, and Cromwell would never raise his head again. I must get it—I will. But how?—how? Alas, I have no head for plot and scheme. I need a helper.

(Enter Cromwell holding letter in his hand.)

(Aside.) Lord! he hath it ready now to send away.

(Enter Capell on gallery above. He leans over railing, looks down.)

CROM: (Looking round the hall and seeing Rachel.) Rachel, hither!

RACHEL: How can I serve you, sir?

CROM: Take charge of th's despatch. At noon Corporal Micklejohn will be here for orders. See he receives the letter.

RACHEL: I will give it to him.

CROM: It is urgent. Bid him mark the superscription. "Oliver St. John, the Parliament House at Westminster. Haste—haste." He must not waste a moment by the way. Upon his arrival he will await Master St. John's pleasure. But as soon as he receiv-

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eth a reply, he must return here with all speed.

RACHEL: The order shall be given in those words.

CROM: (Patting her cheek.) I thank thee, child. Well do I know thy carefulness. (Moves C. to front door, which opens.)

(Enter Ralf, followed by four Musketeers. Rachel goes upstairs, remains on gallery when she hears Ralf's voice.)

Ha—Lieutenant, your report.

RALF: There was nothing to be found.

CROM: Searched you the place?

(Capell descends stairs.)

RALF: House, barns and stables. There was a cellar where I thought to find the arms, but it was empty.

CAPELL: How they did fool thee.

RALF: It is thou who hast been the coze-ner. That letter was a hoax.

CROM: These are unseemly words to thy superior officer, Lieutenant.

RALF: I speak them in your presence, Colonel, and deliberately. This is not the first time the Captain hath played me such a trick.

CAPELL: The trick is thine.

CROM: Silence, sirs! I will not have wrangling before the men. Capell, if thou canst throw light upon this mystery, do so in the fewest words ye may.

CAPELL: I would ask the Lieutenant a few questions.

RALF: Ask me what you will.

CAPELL: Did you search every room?

RALF: All but one bed chamber where lay a woman dying.

CAPELL: How know you she was dying?

RALF: I spoke to her surgeon.

CAPELL: Hadst thou ever seen that gentleman before?

RALF: I have known him years.

CAPELL: His name? Colonel, mark the name.

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RALF: Doctor Taunton, of London.

HEP: A Papist—a black Papist. Physician to the Queen.

RALF: Papist or no—I would trust him with my life.

CROM: Was it upon his word alone that you withheld an examination of the room?

RALF: I saw the lady, and the treasure was not there.

CAPELL: In that chamber, Colonel, are a score of muskets, a thousand pounds of silver and a hundred swords.

RALF: A lie.

CAPELL: Thou wilt recall that word with shame when the men whom I sent after thee return. Hark—here they be—or some of them.

(Horses' hoofs heard off. Enter Sweet-love.)

CROM: Thy news, Quartermaster.

SWEET: The treasure and the arms are found, Colonel. But the Papist doctor who tricked the Lieutenant escaped.

CAPELL: How now, Lieutenant?

RALF: I have indeed been cozened!

CAPELL: You were a good friend to Dr. Taunton.

RALF: I thought him to be an honourable man.

CAPELL: You think all cavaliers honourable.

RALF: I have found one Puritan that is not. Why did you lead me into such a trap?

CAPELL: I gave strict orders that you should search the house.

RALF: I obeyed your orders in all honesty and diligence. You should have warned me of the trickery.

CAPELL: How well you act the part of innocence!

RALF: I knew naught, I say. I would have staked my life that it was a house in mourning and the woman dying. The very

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bell was muffled, the servants weeping, a stillness as of death upon the place. Men (Turning to Musketeers.) be not that the truth?

SOLDIERS: Aye, aye; no doubt of it.

CROM: Thou hast failed in duty, Dangerfield.

RALF: (Hanging his head.) I acknowledge having failed.

HEP: Colonel Cromwell, this man doth stand a traitor self-confessed. He must be cashiered.

(Murmur from troopers.)

CROM: That is for my judgment, Presbyter, and mine alone.

HEP: Wouldst keep him at your side, then, after this?

CROM: Prate not to me. Capell, is Dangerfield a traitor?

CAPELL: I fear me the meanest trooper in the ranks, sir, would refuse to serve him.

SWEET: That is true.

(Troopers shake their heads and murmur again.)

CROM: Prove your charge, Captain.

CAPELL: His admissions prove it.

CROM: Not so.

CAPELL: How comes this confidence in Papists?

CROM: They were friends before the war and he knew naught. But you—you knew where the treasure lay and the nature of this doctor. You knew all this before you sent the Lieutenant to the search; but told him nothing.

CAPELL: I put him to a test.

CROM: You played a trick.

CAPELL: It was a fair trial of his affection to the cause.

CROM: I say—a trick. You like him not, and would turn the men against him. That was your motive. Let me hear no more of the dispute. Dangerfield, you have been over credulous. This should be a lesson

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unto you. Mark it well. I go now to quarters. Let all messages follow me.

(Exit C.)

(Ralf goes up and speaks to Musketeers, two of whom salute and

(Exit C.)

(Capell and Hep. come down R.)

Hep: He will hear naught against his favourite.

CAPELL: Hush—wait!

(Ralf comes down.)

Lieutenant, the Colonel speaketh well; we must not quarrel.

RALF: I have no wish to quarrel.

CAPELL: Well said. Now—to duty. A prisoner of some rank was taken bearing despatches from the King to Rupert. He is lodged within the house. I would leave him in your care.

RALF: Which is his chamber?

CAPELL: (Pointing.) Yonder. The trooper on guard must be relieved. Wilt have the Quartermaster?

SWEET: By your leave, Captain, I have other duties—

CAPELL: (Touching him on the arm.) Tell me of them.

((They come down while Ralf gives orders to his musketeers, who go off.)

Reuben, thou must guard th's prisoner.

SWEET: If you command it—but—

CAPELL: I do command it. The Viscount once saved the Lieutenant's life, and will now expect return in kind. Watch them. Hush, no more!

(Ralf comes down.)

The Quartermaster attends you, Lieutenant.

RALF: Relieve the guard then, Reuben, until I come to thee. I shall not be long.

(Sweetlove salutes and goes up the stairs.)

(Moving L. Aside.) Who is the prisoner? I must see they treat him with humanity.

(Exit L.)

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HEP: Good Captain, you have been cruelly wronged.

CAPELL: I am used to that.

HEP: Cromwell treats you very hardly.

CAPELL: He is a hard man.

HEP: I wonder you serve him.

CAPELL: I serve the cause, reverend sir; not Cromwell.

HEP: You love not the man?

CAPELL: Doth the ox love the goad; doth the bondsman love the overseer? Nay, I love not Cromwell. I speak in confidence!

HEP: Why let him treat you so?

CAPELL: I bide my time.

HEP: Friend, if thou wast to hear that Cromwell conspired against the cause, wouldst give thy help to foil his plans?

CAPELL: If I could save his life by lifting up a finger of one hand, I should keep that finger down.

HEP: Cromwell hath taken Satan to his bosom.

CAPELL: H'ist! These walls are full of ears. What hath Cromwell done?

HEP: He hath writ a letter—I have seen it—accusing my Lord Willoughby of crime and misdemeanours. This letter is addressed one Oliver St. John.

CAPELL: A member of the Parliament.

HEP: Cromwell's cousin.

CAPELL: What is the full purport of the note?

HEP: He calls the General coward, rake and traitor.

CAPELL: Traitor!

HEP: He declareth that my Lord plans to deliver our army into the hands of the enemy. He urges St. John to move in Parliament for my Lord's instant dismissal from his post.

CAPELL: So that Colonel Cromwell may command?

HEP: I judge that to be his purpose. But the letter must not go.

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CAPELL: To intercept a despatch of Cromwell's were a perilous enterprise.

HEP: Cromwell is an enemy unto the cause.

CAPELL: He is the strongest man our army hath. Where is the letter now?

HEP: In my niece's hand.

CAPELL: Rachel!

HEP: Cromwell in my presence charged her to give it to Corporal Mickeljohn.

CAPELL: Well?

HEP: Doth not Cromwell march to-morrow to Lord Willoughby?

CAPELL: Aye!

HEP: If the letter reached his Lordship first, Cromwell would be arrested.

CAPELL: Well?

HEP: Captain, convey the letter unto Willoughby. I beseech you perform this supreme service to the cause.

CAPELL: I might—upon conditions.

HEP: If you laid Cromwell low, the General would refuse you nothing.

CAPELL: It is you, sir, not Lord Willoughby, who must grant what I desire.

HEP: Then it is thine, good friend, though it were my life.

CAPELL: I only ask for the hand of your niece in marriage.

HEP: Rachel—marry Rachel! You know not what you ask.

CAPELL: She is your niece and ward.

HEP: I will urge your suit.

CAPELL: That is not enough.

HEP: I cannot force her inclinations.

CAPELL: Promise me her hand in marriage, or the letter goes to St. John, and Cromwell triumphs.

HEP: You have some plan, then, for intercepting it?

CAPELL: Have no fears for that—but first, your promise.

HEP: (Aside.) The cause of true religion hangs on this. He must have his way—I make the promise.

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CAPELL: I must have your oath.

HEP: I swear it.

CAPELL: The letter, you said, is to be delivered to the Corporal.

HEP: That is the man.

CAPELL: He is dull, and very faithful unto me. Seek him now. Say that he must wait without the door until I call him in, when he must say "Aye" to any question I may put to him. Tell him that I will explain all afterwards.

HEP: I will do as you desire. You think you will succeed?

CAPELL: I am sure of it. Forget not your part. The day Cromwell falls I wed her.

HEP: But if you fail, then this fails, too!

CAPELL: I shall not fail.

(Enter Rachel on gallery; comes downstairs.)

(Raising his voice.) Failure, reverend sir, is a word that has no meaning to a soldier in the cause. Mistress Rachel, wouldst countenance any man who failed?

RACHEL: Not if his cause were just.

HEP: That was well expressed. Farewell, Captain. May all you attempt meet with success.

(Exit R. C.)

RACHEL: Have you seen the Corporal, sir?

CAPELL: No, Madam.

RACHEL: I wonder he is not here. The Colonel told me to expect him about noon. He is to ride to London with this letter.

CAPELL: Give me the letter; I will search for him.

RACHEL: I need not trouble you. He may be just without.

(Moves to door C.)

CAPELL: Madam, I have some serious news.

RACHEL: (Coming down.) Oh, what hath happened?

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CAPELL: I must first ask you a question. Canst trust my honour?

RACHEL: What a strange question.

CAPELL: I have reason for it.

RACHEL: I trust you—

CAPELL: Give me a promise that not a word of what I tell you shall ever pass your lips.

RACHEL: I may tell the Colonel?

CAPELL: Cromwell last of all.

RACHEL: What can it be?

CAPELL: Nay, then, I must hold my peace.

RACHEL: Doth your news concern the Colonel?

CAPELL: It is life or death to Cromwell.

RACHEL: Then I will promise.

CAPELL: You hold a letter addressed to one Master St. John.

RACHEL: How know you that?

CAPELL: I have discovered a vile plot against the Colonel. It is well-laid and very dangerous, but you have the power to make it harmless.

RACHEL: I would give my life for Colonel Cromwell.

CAPELL: Amen.

RACHEL: Who hath laid the plot?

CAPELL: This Master Oliver St. John, trusted by Cromwell as a brother.

RACHEL: I cannot believe that he would meditate such crime.

CAPELL: I know it. Through the grace of Providence I overheard some suspicious words between two soldiers of my troop. I consulted your reverend uncle, who hath seen this letter, and I so dealt with one soldier that he told me all. His name is Corporal Micklejohn.

RACHEL: It was into his hands I was to give the letter.

CAPELL: Aye!

RACHEL: Tell me the plot.

CAPELL: Master St. John—I have this

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from your uncle—is jealous of Cromwell's growing influence in Parliament, and would undo him. Now St. John knew that Cromwell distrusteth Lord Willoughby, Commander of our army, and tempted the Colonel into writing his opinion of my Lord. Cromwell, believing the letter to be for St. John's eyes alone, hath done this with dangerous freedom.

RACHEL: If the Colonel maketh charges he can prove them.

CAPELL: He will never have the opportunity. This letter, Madam, will be taken straight unto my Lord. Cromwell will be tried for mutiny and shot.

RACHEL: Heaven forbid! the letter must not go.

CAPELL: You hold the issue in your hands.

RACHEL: I shall go unto the Colonel now, and warn him.

CAPELL: That would be madness. He would not listen to a word against his cousin, whom he looks on as his mainstay in the Parliament.

RACHEL: But I dare not disobey his direct command.

CAPELL: Not to save his life?

RACHEL: Your words are grave, sir, and well meant; but I have no proof of them.

CAPELL: Then listen here—your uncle hath solemnly declared to me—hark! who is that without?

RACHEL: (Going to door.) It is the Corporal.

CAPELL: The Corporal! Then you shall have the proof—now. Enter there!

(Enter Corporal.)

Hither!

(Corporal salutes and moves down.)

I have some questions, Corporal, which thou must answer. Hast come to bear a letter to Master St. John?

CORP: Aye, Captain.

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CAPELL: But this letter, by Master St. John's orders, thou art taking direct to my Lord Willoughby.

CORP: I—hardly catch your meaning.

CAPELL: Answer—"aye" or "nay."

CORP: Oh—aye, Captain.

CAPELL: That will do—without!

(Exit Corporal.)

Mark you his confusion! Madam, entrust this letter unto me. I will give another to the man so like the true one he will not know the difference. When he hath taken it to Willoughby he shall be seized, then will I tell Cromwell all—and receive his thanks.

RACHEL: Is there no other way?

CAPELL: None! Choose this instant, or it will be all too late. Accept my service, or see Cromwell die, and forever through your life have his blood upon your head.

RACHEL: (Aside.) I must save him. Sir, on your oath as a Christian man swear that you will preserve the Colonel's life.

CAPELL: I swear it, and (Takes letter and thrusts it in doublet.) I will tell h'm all when the time is ripe.

(Enter Ralf L.)

RACHEL: That should be to-morrow.

CAPELL: To-morrow is too soon.

(Ralf closes door sharply.)

CAPELL: (Aside.) Dangerfield! What hath he heard and seen? (Aloud.) Madam, the Lieutenant would accost you.

RACHEL: We will take him in our confidence.

CAPELL: I take no one in my confidence.

RACHEL: I will explain.

CAPELL: You forget your promise.

RALF: If th's lady doth desire to speak—she shall speak.

CAPELL: Her lips are sealed.

RALF: (Aside.) What devil's work is th's?

RACHEL: I will keep my promise.

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CAPELL: You do well, dear Madam. I will now go seek the Corporal.

(Exit.)

RALF: (Aside.) There is a plot. I know there is a plot. (Aloud.) Dear lady, if there is aught that I can do to serve you—command me.

RACHEL: I am truly grateful, but there is nothing.

(Ralf bows and crosses L. to staircase.)

Are you ill, sir? You look so wan.

RALF: Nay, notill.

RACHEL: I fear you are wounded.

RALF: That is a better word.

RACHEL: It must be tended instantly.

RALF: There is no cure. My body is not hurt. That were indeed a small matter. I would rather have a limb torn from me than endure what I suffer now.

RACHEL: Mean you Brampton Grange? But it was only a mistake.

RALF: Madam, it is by such mistakes a soldier loses that which is more precious than his life—his honour! "You have failed," the Colonel said, "in duty." Every word was a sword-thrust through my heart. When a soldier fails he is disgraced. I shall receive reminders of my failure, stinging as the stroke of knotted lash on a raw wound. My troopers, whose devotion I have always held, will now laugh grimly at their officer. Yet think not I shrink from this. It is only a just punishment. The torture that is unbearable is the knowledge that Cromwell's confidence in me hath gone. I can bear anything but that. My mind's made up. I shall resign my commission, that he may be free to get a better man.

RACHEL: You will not leave us?

RALF: Who would miss me?

RACHEL: Your friends.

RALF: They must despise me.

RACHEL: I know one who doth not.

RALF: Have I your sympathy? (Turning back.)

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RACHEL: My sympathy and my respect.

RALF: That indeed doth make a wondrous difference.

RACHEL: Think not, either, that you have lost the Colonel's confidence. Have you not saved his life?

(Enter Hepworth R. C. He stands in shadow of staircase.)

RALF: Dearest Madam, you give me sweet comfort. (Takes her hand and kisses it.)

HEP: How now, sir? I have found thee out at last. Thou art her lover.

RALF: I was not making love.

HEP: Lie not to me—ribbald.

RALF: I pray you moderate your language. None but a man whose cloth and age I must respect would say that twice.

HEP: Wouldst threaten me? Thine impudence shall be reported to the Colonel. Now leave us.

RALF: Not at your bidding.

(Enter Cromwell C.)

RACHEL: Uncle, you are unjust. This gentleman hath not deserved your censure.

HEP: Wouldst thou defy me, too? Nay, this passeth all patience. To thy chamber and remain there at my pleasure.

CROM: Stay! Presbyter, the maid is not a child.

HEP: She is my ward.

CROM: Our ward.

(Enter Capell C.)

HEP: I claim authority over her by her father's will.

CROM: You claim too much.

HEP: She leaveth your roof, Cromwell, within an hour.

CROM: Not unless she doth desire it.

RACHEL: Indeed, I do not wish to go.

CROM: Then you remain here. Presbyter, mark that.

HEP: I have legal power to compel her to obey me. I shall appeal unto the courts.

CROM: Appeal to whom you will.

HEP: You saw not that man's behaviour to the maid.

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CROM: I know the maid, and trust her.

HEP: I will go to Parliament.

CROM: Go! but think not to move me a hand's breadth. The maid is happy here, and safe. You will be well advised to let the matter rest. That is my reading of it.

HEP: Thou art puffed up with pride, Cromwell. Thou art so great a man in these eastern counties that thou thinkest no one will contradict thee. The time will come, and soon, when thou shalt find that no man may hold himself above the law.

CROM: Presbyter, you know me not. I am nothing in myself; but I believe the Lord hath put me in this place to do His work. Wherefore I shall not falter, not be afraid, nor ask for any man's approval, but go forward resolutely unto the end.

(Enter Corporal C.)

What dost here, Micklejohn?

CORP. (Saluting.) Please you, Colonel, I have come for the despatch.

CROM: It should have gone. Rachel, give it to him.

RACHEL: The Captain hath it, s'r.

CROM: (Turning sharply.) The Captain?

CAPELL: (Taking packet from doublet and handing it to Corp.) It is here; I have been searching for the man.

(Cromwell glances at Capell, then gives instructions.)

HEP: (Aside to Capell.) Thou hast failed, then, after all?

CAPELL: Nay, I have not failed.

(Cromwell comes down, Corp. saluting and moving to door C. Hepworth and Capell fall apart. Crom. stands between them.)

CROM: Sirs, that letter is of serious consequence. I hope for the sake of all it mis-carries not.

CHAPPELL: You trust that Corporal?

CROM: I have no fear of him; but I have other fears.

HEP: Hath he not the letter?

CROM: Aye!

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CAPELL: Then why have fears, Colonel?

CROM: Because, good Captain, a storm is gathering around our heads, which if we meet it not with single hearts will sweep us all to ruin. Sirs, but a few hours since I discovered treason in our ranks. Now, treason, like disease, doth spread and grow if it be not beaten out at once. Our army aboundeth in true and godly men, but even among them poison may soon do its evil work, and the whole force be honeycombed with mean conspiracies.

HEP: The treason must be stopped.

CROM: It will be, sir—but only the Almighty knoweth whether it can be done in time. Wherefore I do implore you—whatever you may think of me—be true unto the cause. We join the army on the morrow. The Lord grant we flinch not, but bear ourselves as becometh the religion we profess. Yet howsoever this may be—and He alone knoweth our hearts—the right will triumph, the wicked be utterly confounded and the will of God be done.

CURTAIN.

(One day passes.)

[END OF ACT I.]

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ACT II.

SCENE—Entrance Hall, Cromwell's house, Ely. Time—Afternoon.

Capell discovered writing at table L. C.

(Enter Madam Cromwell R.)

MADAM C: Dost know, sir, where I may find the Colonel Cromwell?

CAPELL: He is at quarters, Madam.

MADAM C: When do you expect him?

CAPELL: I cannot tell you. May I proffer you a seat?

MADAM C: Nay, I will not sit.

CAPELL: Shall I send a messenger unto the Colonel?

MADAM C: I would not trouble you.

CAPELL: I should deem it a privilege.

MADAM C: Tut! Strain not at courtesies, good sir.

CAPELL: Nay, I am a simple soldier, Madam. I fear the Colonel thought my words of yesterday touching the Lieutenant to be over blunt.

MADAM C: Thy worst enemy, Captain, would not call thee blunt.

CAPELL: I was loth to speak. But duty compelled me to be frank.

MADAM C: Thy sense of duty is a wondrous thing.

CAPELL: I would follow it, and your son, Madam, to the death.

MADAM C: Nay, not that.

CAPELL: I do assure you.

MADAM C: I believe it not, good Captain.

CAPELL: Then you deem me false?

MADAM C: Prithee, sir, thrust not words into my mouth.

CAPELL: I asked a question.

MADAM C: I do not answer questions unless I know my questioner.

CAPELL: You have known me many months.

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MADAM C: It would take me years to know you, sir.

(Enter Betty L. C.)

CAPELL: My heart is on my lips—I say, I love your son.

MADAM C: Let your acts prove it.

CAPELL: You judge me hardly because my features are ill-cut, and my voice untuneful. Truly, Madam, a man doth not make his face!

MADAM C: A face my be an index to the heart and character.

BETTY: The worshipful Captain hath a heart—alas!

CAPELL: A friend in need. Mistress, my humble thanks.

BETTY: Thank Rachel, please.

CAPELL: Mistress Rachel knows my heart.

BETTY: She would not believe a word against you.

MADAM C: Rachel knoweth naught of the world, or men.

BETTY: I think she knows the Captain—now!

CAPELL: Someone, perchance, hath been maligning me.

BETTY: I did.

CAPELL: You were in jest.

BETTY: Rachel took it not in jest.

CAPELL: Why have I fallen under your displeasure?

BETTY: Because I know your purpose in this house, good sir!

CAPELL: I have no purpose to conceal.

BETTY: You desire to marry Rachel.

CAPELL: Indeed, I should hardly dare to raise my eyes to her.

BETTY: I have seen you do it often when you thought no one was nigh.

CAPELL: You do me cruel wrong. I shall acquaint your father.

BETTY: My father knows of it.

CAPELL: I have no fears of the Colonel Cromwell.

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BETTY: So Rachel said.

CAPELL: Ah—she trusts me.

BETTY: It was not all she said.

CAPELL: I pray you keep nothing back.

BETTY: I do not think I will—though she spoke in private. “He may be godly”—I use her words—“but rather than marry such a man I would be put to death.” That was all she said.

CAPELL: I admire your wit.

BETTY: If you doubt my word go unto Rachel.

MADAM C: Child, thou hast said enough. Come now, with me. Captain, prithee tell the Colonel I will seek him at a better opportunity.

CAPELL: I will in form him, Madam.

(Betty and Madam C. move R. Enter Sweetlove on gallery.)

BETTY: Chide me not, Granny. I had a meaning in my words. He hath hurt our dear one. I know not how, but I know that I could kill him for it.

(Exit.)

CAPELL: (As'ide.) I shall have to cut this maiden's claws. Well, Reuben?

SWEET: The prisoner's escape is planned. At dark, when all have gone to prayers, my Lord is to steal forth disguised. He hath the password and will go alone so that the Lieutenant shall not be at any risk.

CAPELL: Then we will catch that younker in a net and crush him—so!

(Enter Cromwell L. C. Sweetlove stands at attention and salutes.)

CROM: Greet you, Captain.

CAPELL: The Quartermaster is here for orders, s'r.

CROM: Bear these: We march at dawn. Let every troop be in readiness an hour before. If I find any men backward in exercise, or slovenly in dress, they will be left behind.

SWEET: Aye, Colonel. (Salutes.)

(Exit C.)

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CROM: (Going to table L. C.) Hand me the plan of Lincolnshire.

(Capell takes it from chair and unrolls it on table.)

We march to Boston, and there concentrate. What saith the General? (Takes despatch from doublet and reads.) "The Marquis of Newcastle's army poureth down upon us. We have no cavalry and our foot deserteth nigh a score a day. Haste, or all is lost." Thus the General. (Laughs.)

CAPELL: My Lord seems in desperate need of men.

CROM: He hath nigh two thousand.

CAPELL: They have deserted—

CROM: Why have they deserted?

CAPELL: I dare not make a guess.

CROM: Thou art discreet. (Aside, walking up and down the hall.) The capture of this Viscount and his despatches was a Providence. Rupert and Newcastle in the North, the King at Oxford—all to burst upon us when my Lord Willoughby, the noble commander of our army, gave the word. But my letter to St. John will unmask the plot, and save the cause. (Comes down.) Find me the Papist stronghold, Stainsby House.

CAPELL: (Placing finger on map.) There, sir, five miles from Boston.

CROM: A short night march from here. Lord Willoughby desires that we reduce the place.

CAPELL: It is strong and will make a s'ubborn stand.

CROM: (Taking letter from doublet. The King hath a word to Rupert on the point. (Reads.) "Charlton to be Governor of Stainsby; hold it at all costs." Then if my Lord escaped from here, he would go thither.

CAPELL: God grant he doth not escape.

CROM: Who guards h'm?

CAPELL: Dangerfield.

CROM: Ha! (Pauses—aside.) I do not

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(Aloud.) This Stainsby House. It is old and full of secret passages. There will be a postern somewhere, by which those who know the place find entrance if hard pressed. Could we find this postern the siege would not last long.

(Enter Sanctify Jordan, who starts when he sees Cromwell and draws back.)

Thy business?

SANC: Why, please you, sir—I desired but a private word with the worshipful Captain.

CROM: Have thy word.

SANC: I thought he was alone.

CROM: Speak, and before me. Dost wish to be arrested for a spy?

SANC: Me a spy. God forgive you, master, for the lie.

CROM: What sirrah! Such language unto me. (Aside.) I like this spirit.

SANC: If a man call me spy, I call him liar. That be only fair.

CROM: (Laughing.) We'll cry quits. Now hold thy peace and go upon an errand. Bear word unto the Viscount Charlton that I crave his presence here. Bring him thyself.

SANC: But he is dangerous.

CROM: Dost fear an unarmed man?

SANC: I fear nothing but that he may escape.

CROM: If he doth, I shall hang thee. Begone—I am in haste.

SANC: (Moving upstairs—aside.) Woe's me, I fear that cavalier. But I fear Noll's anger worst. I must borrow a musket from the guard.

(Exit C.)

CROM: That Viscount is a fearless fellow, but of no discretion.

CAPELL: A debauched and evil living rake.

CROM: Friend to our Lieutenant—is he not?

CAPELL: They were boon companions.

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CROM: Ha!

(Enter Charlton, followed by Sanctify on gallery.)

CHARL: Gad, Colonel, you have a cruel wit. Dost put all thy guests in peril of their lives?

CROM: You jest, my Lord.

CHARL: Jest! Look at this servitor of thine. Upon my oath he hath tried to snoot me near a dozen times since I left my chamber.

(Sanctify, holding gun awkwardly, points muzzle at Charlton.)

CROM: Down with thy musket, oaf.

(Sanctify drops butt upon his toes.)

SANC: Holy Jerusalem!

CROM: An oath in my presence. A shilling from thy pay.

SANC: (Groaning. Holding his foot.) 'Tis a most malignant piece. I believe it be bewitched.

CROM: My Lord, his proper weapon is a broom.

SANC: Nay, indeed; I would be a soldier. I can wield a sword.

CHARL: (Bursting into a laugh.) 'Slife, thou woudst make an army tremble.

SANC: I'd have shot you, my Lord, had you tried to run away.

CHARL: You mean yourself. That gun is l'ke to burst now.

SANC: (Leaping into the air.) The Lord preserve me.

CHARL: Colonel, hast many soldiers of h's mettle?

CROM: Nay—Prince Rupert killed them all at Edge Hill fight.

SANC: I shall go unto the battle singing l'ke the Israelites of old.

CROM: Thou'lt have no breath until a broadsword breaks thy crown, and then thy song wilt have another tune.

CHARL: His proper place is on a baggage cart.

SANC: But I would wear no armour then.

CROM: Pish! thou'rt no use.

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SANC: Make me a scout, good master.

CHARL: Lord help the army that did follow thee.

SANC: I am a Lincolner by birth—I know the country well.

CROM: (Aside.) A Lincolner, ha! Where wast thou bred, boy?

SANC: Within a furlong of the gates of one Stainsby House, near Boston.

(Charlton starts.)

CROM: (Aside.) My Lord changes countenance. I must pursue this matter. Sanctify, thou wouldst never make a scout. Thou hast not been outside a house at night since I have known you.

SANC: 'Deed, master, I know every inch of country round my home.

CROM: Wert thou a wastrel and a wanderer in those days?

SANC: Nay, I was most godly. But night air was commended for my health.

CROM: Ah! My Lord, are there many deer in Stainsby Park?

CHARL: There were once, but there have been too many hunters of late years.

CROM: We have one here, methinks.

SANC: I never hunted deer. It was the house I knew the best. I have been there an hundred times.

CROM: When the nights were fine?

SANC: By night and day.

CHARL: He could not get in at night. The gates are always closed.

SANC: Not all the gates, my Lord!

CROM: Hold thy peace. My Lord, you forget you were the bearer of despatches—now in my hands.

CHARL: His Majesty hath never been to Stainsby.

CROM: He is much interested in the stronghold and seems to know it well.

CHARL: What saith the King? (Aside.) Good Lord, we are undone.

CROM: That which he thinks it well the Prince should know.

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CHARL: Gad! Colonel, 'twould be éasier to break a bar of iron than squeeze a word from you.

CROM: I seek knowledge, not impart it. Give me your counsel. I am commanded to reduce this stronghold.

CHARL: Nay, I will answer nothing. Leave the place alone.

CROM: If you help me not, I raze it to the ground.

CHARL: The chance of war is not always on one side.

CROM: There is no chance in war.

CHARL: The house is safe enough.

CROM: Brave words, belied by your troubled brow, my Lord. I ask you would it not be better to yield the stronghold without bloodshed? I would give the garrison generous terms, and set you free.

CHARL: I am not now a member of the garrison.

CROM: You know the secrets of the whole defence.

CHARL: Dost insult me by the thought that I'd betray them?

CROM: You have betrayed more than you know, my Lord. Your mind is an open book.

CHARL: You have a poor opinion of my honour.

CROM: Dost refuse to consider terms?

CHARL: I will make no terms.

CROM: Then I must take you unto my General Lord Willoughby.

CHARL: My bitterest enemy.

CROM: Who will put you to a shameful death.

CHARL: My faith, 'tis hard to give that rogue so sweet a pleasure. But I have no choice. Rather than be a traitor to His Majesty the King, I would die ten thousand deaths. (Moves towards staircase.)

CROM: Stay My Lord. M'sjudge me not. I knew that you would not turn traitor. I only proposed to acqu're a little information

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from your Lordship. If any words of mine can influence Lord Willoughby, you will not regret this conversation. It hath been most satisfactory to me.

CHARL: Faith, good host, you would read hearts through breast-plates. I like not your company the least. Now, brave scout-master, Sanctify, lead on. This time, pray hold your gun discreetly; I wish you not to come to any harm. So—bravo! March! Colonel, adieu.

(Exit Charlton and Sanctify.)

CROM: We shall need but small force to take that stronghold.

CAPELL: A thousand men hath tried and failed.

CROM: Pish! My Lord betrayed himself.

CAPELL: I did not understand him.

CROM: Listen then. The house is strong, but from Lord Charlton's agitation I judge it hath weak places that cannot be made good. I am satisfied that you will discover a secret entrance, mayhap more than one. Send Sanctify to find them and make full use of his knowledge of the place and people. That man hath more sense than appeareth on the surface and will do the work right well. He must depart at once. Follow with two picked troops at ten of the clock to-night so that you may arrive in darkness and make all your dispositions before dawn. I marked the place when passing it some months since. To the rear there is cover for a regiment—in front none. This postern will be in rear, and by dawn one troop—not more—must be in hiding there. The other with a culverin should make a feint of storming to draw the full attention of the garrison. But let them not see a man, until the postern is properly beset. Then sound the onset, and attack the front gates with determination the while the other troop creeps in at rear. The cavaliers, seeing so small a force will be off their guard, and if your men do their work discreetly

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should be taken completely unawares.

CAPELL: The scheme is shrewdly planned.

CROM: And the command yours.

CAPELL: I shall require a trusty second.

CROM: Choose him yourself.

CAPELL: (Considers. Aside.) I have it. Lieutenant Dangerfield.

CROM: Ha! a strange choice.

CAPELL: He is brave and very skilful in a siege. (Aside.) I shall have him in a clutch.

CROM: Have thy way. To quarters now and pick your men. But, first, send Dangerfield to me.

CAPELL: On the instant, Colonel. (Moves upstairs. Aside.) I like not those last words. How much doth he suspect? He can know nothing yet—when he does, it will be all too late.

(Exit C.)

CROM: (Walking up and down.) A plot is brewing. Twice have I seen Capell and Hepworth in earnest converse which ceased abruptly at my entrance. Yet the letter went, though it was delayed, and Capell delayed it. Guessed he its contents? Nay, 'twas writ and sealed before it left my hands. Stay! The Presbyter. I found him in my library. The letter open on the desk. I bethink me now, his face was flushed; the hand that rested on my chair a-tremble. Hepworth! Ha—a fanatic—therefore unscrupulous. A Presbyterian, therefore supporting Willoughby; a minister, therefore unable to see beyond the limits of a creed. England, the Lord help thee if such bigots ever hold thee in their grip. May the Almighty in His justice deal with them as I will deal with these poor fools who think to ruin me now.

(Enter Ralf on gallery.)

Ye have received the news?

RALE: (Coming down.) I am most grateful to you.

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CROM: You are the Captain's choice.

RALF: I could almost think I had done the man injustice.

CROM: Pish—ye do not know him yet the least. How is your prisoner?

RALF: As merry as though he were to greet his lady on the morrow instead of death.

CROM: Why death?

RALF: He will be in the power of that devil—Willoughby.

CROM: Hist—fool. If any heard ye, you would get short shrift from His Lordship.

RALF: He killed my father.

CROM: I thought it was the Bishop—Laud.

RALF: The Commission was divided, but Willoughby, who once had been my father's friend, cast the vote against him—so he died. I pray the day may come when my Lord shall get short shrift from me.

CROM: If you would see that day, silence, on thy life. Now, good lad (Patting Ralf on shoulder.) to duty. (Moves L. C. Aside.) If he hath not already planned his friend's escape, I know him not. (Laughs.) I may safely leave it in his hands.

(Exit.)

RALF: Duty—what is my duty? As a soldier of the Parliament I should hold Charlton fast for Willoughby to kill him. Charlton—who is dearer to me than a brother—Charlton—who, when we were at college, saved my life. Can I let him die? Nay, I will not. Mayhap it will ruin me, but I should not be fit to live did I desert him in his need. (Slowly ascending stairs.)

(Enter Rachel R.)

(Pausing. Aside.) Rachel! Fate is kinder than I knew. (Comes down.) Mistress Rachel.

RACHEL: (Starting.) Master Dangerfield.

RALF: Doth this meeting displease you?

RACHEL: Nay, I am glad. I have wish-

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ed to tell you how much my uncle's harsh words grieved me. They were unjust and cruel. But he hath been misled by your enemies. I pray you will forgive him.

RALF: Most freely. But the enemy you name, your enemy as well as mine, I will not forgive.

RACHEL: I have no enemies.

RALF: Alas, you are in danger from one now.

RACHEL: In Colonel Cromwell's house?

RALF: I would I might speak plainly.

RACHEL: I beg that you will speak.

RALF: There is one within this house—Captain Capell—who loves you—nay, I will not call his passion by such a sacred name.

RACHEL: The Captain! He hath never spake a word of such a thing.

RALF: He will first get you in his power.

RACHEL: My uncle would protect me then.

RALF: Your uncle is a weapon in his hands.

RACHEL: But he cannot use the Colonel for his ends.

RALF: I believe he plots the Colonel's ruin.

RACHEL: Why think you that?

RALF: I judge from what I saw and heard yesterday at noon.

RACHEL: Would that you heard all.

RALF: Tell me now.

RACHEL: Oh, that I could—or might. (Putting her hand to her head and shuddering.) I know not how it is, but since that hour I have had no peace of mind. All last night I had visions of disaster in my dreams, yet they took no form or shape. My head burns as though I had a fever, yet my hands are cold. But I keep you—when you would be doing.

RALF: Nay, I am not on duty. I have been longing all the day to meet you.

RACHEL: We do not often meet.

RALF: I trust I shall be more fortunate when I return—if I live.

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RACHEL: You will not risk your life without a cause.

RALF: I thought it of no value unto any one.

RACHEL: I will not have you speak so rudely of your life.

RALF: Do you value it, dear mistress?

RACHEL: I do indeed! (Pause.) So do all your friends.

RALF: They may be counted on the fingers of one hand, in truth on one finger.

RACHEL: For shame. Think of the Colonel, Madam, Betty and many more.

RALF: I may think of them, but it is seldom that they think of me. I am alone. I mind not that. I only ask that one friend should think of me. Dost guess her name? I need her sore, and before I go I must know for sure that she is my friend. (Takes her hand.)

RACHEL: Truly, sir, you have my friendship, if it is of any worth.

RALF: It is the highest honour that could be vouchsafed to me.

RACHEL: I should say that of your friendship. (Sighs.) A friend is more to me than I can well express.

RALF: That you prize my friendship maketh me happy beyond words. (Drawing nearer to her.)

(Rachel slowly turns away, but leaves her hand in his. Sound of trumpet in distance.)

Alas, the trumpet call. I must go. Yet before I go (Takes both her hands and kisses them.) Rachel, art thou indeed my friend?

RACHEL: While I live.

RALF: (Kneeling.) Then will I tell the all that thou art to me.

RACHEL: (Starting.) Oh, you must not!

RALF: But I will. Rachel, before I saw thy face I was a man without a God. My father, whom I passionately loved, was done to death before my eyes. I cared for naught and believed naught. Life was all

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darkness until I met thee here. Then straightway a light broke on me, and I prayed. I was as one who having lost his way hath lain him down to die, when on a sudden he sees the morning star arise and knoweth dawn is near. Thy purity and goodness have taught me that there is a God, and though I go to war again, it is with faith in heaven and in Christ. I go loving thee, my dearest, oh my dearest, until the last drop of life-blood leaves my heart, and my last breath hath passed away. (Rises slowly, and raises her hands to his lips. Rachel turns towards him and smiles. He clasped her in his arms.) My darling. Dost thou love me?

RACHEL: I have loved you from the first. And all you have done since then hath made me love you more and more. I am not worthy. You have gone forth and dared the world. I have been in shelter all my life. But that life is yours—and with your strength to lean upon and your hand to guide, I shall grow braver and more fit to be a helpmate unto you. You must teach me, dearest, to be brave.

(Sound of Hepworth's voice in passage.)

HEP: Hast seen my niece, the Mistress Rachel? (Off.)

RACHEL: Hark, there is my uncle. Leave me now. It is too soon for anyone to know.

(Trumpet sounds louder.)

RALF: (Kisses her.) Farewell, my darling.

RACHEL: May the Almighty keep thee safe.

(Ralf moves C. They kiss hands as he reaches front door.)

(Exit Ralf C.)

(Enter Hepworth and Capell L.)

HEP: Niece, we have sought thee everywhere, being on most urgent business. Thou must leave this house with me to-day.

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RACHEL: What reason have you for such a strange command?

HEP: I have many reasons.

RACHEL: I will consult the Colonel.

HEP: He must not know.

RACHEL: I do not go without his knowledge.

HEP: Thou must obey me.

CAPELL: Your pardon—give me leave to speak. Madam, the Colonel hath become suspicious and will question you concerning the despatch.

RACHEL: I will not betray you.

HEP: None can withstand Cromwell when he is aroused.

RACHEL: I cannot see sufficient cause for my departure.

HEP: It must be, I say.

RACHEL: Must is not a word to use to me.

HEP: Eh? Thou hast become strangely disobedient since yesterday. What hath happened to thee?

RACHEL: I will not, even at your bidding, leave my home and friends.

CAPELL: Reverend sir, leave it to me. Madam, I hold a letter which you gave me. (Takes out letter.) I hold it. Should I choose it would be on its way to Lord Willoughby within an hour.

RACHEL: You would break faith with me?

CAPELL: That depends upon your action now.

RACHEL: You swore to me Cromwell should be safe. You dare not break that oath.

CAPELL: Cromwell is in no danger—yet!

HEP: Obey and all is well. You can trust my word.

CAPELL: We await your answer.

RACHEL: You have received it. I will not go with you. (Moves R.)

CAPELL: Then Cromwell dies.

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RACHEL: Uncle, he is your friend.

HEP: He was. But now—I trust him not. Let him die.

RACHEL: I will straightway warn him of your plots.

CAPELL: He is at quarters, full a mile away. I have a horseman waiting at the door. (Horse heard off.)

CAPELL: You hold Cromwell's life and if I obey you, uncle, what do I gain?

CAPELL: Cromwell's safety.

RACHEL: That was what you said before.

CAPELL: Go with your uncle and the letter goeth, too. See—I place it in his hands. (Gives letter to Hep.)

RACHEL: Where am I to go?

HEP: Only to Milton on the Cambridge road.

RACHEL: That is where the Captain's mother dwells.

CAPELL: She would welcome you.

RACHEL: You have some purpose in conveying me there.

HEP: On our arrival you shall know it all.

RACHEL: (Aside.) I know it now. You hold me in a vice between you.

CAPELL: You hold Cromwell's life and honour in a vice.

RACHEL: (Aside.) H's life. Ah, I must save h's life. (Aloud.) But I will not go unless you take oath, uncle, not to part with the despatch until it is delivered into Cromwell's hands.

HEP: I will take the oath.

(Enter Betty R.)

RACHEL: Then I do your bidding.

HEP: Speed, then, speed—put yourself in readiness. I will see the horses are in waiting. (Moves L.) Delay not, Rachel.

(Exit with Capell.)

RACHEL: (Moves L.) (Aside.) The Captain's eyes gleam with h's triumph. Let h'm beware. I will meet h's mine with

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counter mine. He dealeth no longer with a trembling girl, but with a woman fighting for her honour and her life.

BETTY: (Aside.) What can have happened? Dearest, you are in trouble?

RACHEL: (Aside.) She must not know. Nay, all is well now.

BETTY: You are going away. I hate your uncle.

RACHEL: It is not for his sake that I go away.

BETTY: (Stamping her foot.) Tell me your secret or I shall hate you. Am I a child?

RACHEL: You shall know my secret. But no one else must know it—promise:

BETTY: I promise—I promise. Now—quickly!

RACHEL: (Whispers. Betty laughs and claps her hands.) Master Dangerfield! Oh, what a fury the Captain will be in. As for your uncle, dear—oh, how I should love to see him when he hears the news.

RACHEL: He will not approve, I fear. But a woman's heart and life belong to her alone. Now I must hurry. I will see you again before I go. But forget not—silence! (Puts finger to lips.)

(Exit L.)

(Enter Claypole R.)

BETTY: (Aside.) So they are betrothed! I am glad. And that is strange, because I loved Master Dangerfield—at least I thought I did. Yet he worships Rachel—and he never worshipped me! (Sighs.) But I am sure I am in love.

(Claypole comes down. Betty laughs again. He sidles up to her. She keeps her face turned from him, and moves away. He follows, tries to kiss her—she looks round and starts back.)

Oh—you!

CLAY: Whom did you think it was?

BETTY: A better man than you.

CLAY: Doth any other man love thee?

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BETTY: I could name six.

CLAY: Their names, Madam.

BETTY: (Laughing.) They would die of laughing an they saw you now.

CLAY: I will not be laughed at by any man alive.

BETTY: Better be laughed at by a man than by a woman.

CLAY: Thou art my mistress.

BETTY: Then leave me. I am tired of you. (Turns her back on him.)

CLAY: Not until you say farewell.

BETTY: Farewell, farewell.

CLAY: I am going to the war. We shall never meet again.

BETTY: Fie—thinkst I know not a soldier when I see one. You are none.

CLAY: (Throwing back cloak and showing breast-plates beneath it.) I am a cornet in your father's tenth troop.

BETTY: (Wiping her eyes.) Oh! you must not go away. (Turns slowly round.)

CLAY: I have promised.

BETTY: I do not wish to be alone.

CLAY: (Puts h's arm about her.) Thou never shall be, sweetheart, when I return. (Kisses her.)

(Enter Rachel L. Stands at door a moment, coughs. Betty springs from Claypole's arms.)

BETTY: See what you have done. I can never look anyone in the face again.

CLAY: A greeting, Mistress Rachel. It was—hem—it was a joke.

BETTY: You dare to say so.

RACHEL: (Kissing her.) A mischief still, even in your joy. Master Claypole, you are most fortunate.

BETTY: I am the most unlucky woman in the world.

RACHEL: For shame.

BETTY: He maketh love, he sweareth fealty and then he says it is a joke.

CLAY: That was not the joke. I meant—you know well I meant not that.

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BETTY: I marry no man who knows not what he means.

RACHEL: Peace, peace; I will leave you.

BETTY: (Embracing her.) I am so happy. (Turning to Clay.) What if father forbid it?

CLAY: Oh!

BETTY: You will never dare defy him.

CLAY: I will.

BETTY: Then go and do it.

CLAY: I will go—upon his return.

BETTY: You dare not, I say.

CLAY: I dare defy a world to marry thee. I will go now. (Moves to door C.)

RACHEL: Well spoken.

BETTY: (Runs after him.) Nay! You shall not go alone.

RACHEL: Guard her well, sir.

BETTY: He guard me! Methinks with father he will be glad of my protection. Come, sir. (Takes his hand.) Come and meet your fate.

(Exit Betty and Claypole.)

RACHEL: I am glad of this. He is a worthy fellow, and Betty, spite of all her mischief, hath loved him long. (Goes to table, looks round room, sighs.) When shall I see the dear old house again, my home for all these happy years. It is hard to go, but it is to save his life—the life so precious to his friends, aye, and to England. There is no man like unto Cromwell. This place is full of memories of him. (Takes up sword lying on table. Kisses it.) The sword that he hath drawn for freedom and for right. (Takes up Bible and sinks upon her knees.) Th's he loveth best of all. It resteth in his hand more often than the sword. Even as I hold it in my arms I feel his strength of purpose and his power of will encompass me.

(Enter Cromwell L. C. He stands watching her.)

I have done right, and I shall conquer. The Lord will protect me.

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CROM: (Lays his hand upon her head.)
Daughter, hast anything to tell me?

RACHEL: (Rises.) I have come to say
good-bye.

CROM: (Sits at table.) Why do you leave
us all so suddenly?

RACHEL: It is best.

CROM: Your reason.

RACHEL: My uncle wisheth it.

CROM: Tell me your reason.

RACHEL: I cannot—now.

(Cromwell turns away and takes up
papers. Rachel throws herself at his feet.)
Father!

(Cromwell slowly drops paper and lays
both hands upon her shoulders.)

CROM: Well!

RACHEL: Grant me your blessing before
I go.

CROM: Why dost thou go?

RACHEL: Because I would undo a
wrong.

CROM: (Rises, raises Rachel to her feet
and holds her hands.) I command thee to
tell me what it is that thou hast done.

RACHEL: I must not—yet.

CROM: A plot hath been laid against me.
Armed with the knowledge thou canst give
I will undo my enemies; without it they
may take me unawares. Bare thy heart.

RACHEL: I cannot—to-day.

CROM: It will be too late to-morrow.

RACHEL: Oh no!

CROM: Child, thou hast been drawn into
th's plot. I do not ask thee to speak against
thy conscience, but if thou keepst a prom-
ise exacted from thee by some trick, thou
dost but play into their hands. Thou
thrust'st thy head into a noose, which the
worthy Captain will pull tight when it suits
h's plans.

RACHEL: How know you, sir, that the
Captain is concerned in it?

CROM: Because I know the Captain. Tell
me where I shall find the letter you gave
unto him.

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RACHEL: I must not say.

CROM: That's enough. It hath not gone to London.

RACHEL: No!

CROM: Is it against your conscience to tell me why you were concerned in such a crime?

RACHEL: 'Twas to save your life, which was in danger.

CROM: You mean you were told so. There is a difference there.

RACHEL: Indeed I know that now.

CROM: Yet you trust them still. But I forget. One is your uncle.

RACHEL: Oh, sir, be merciful to him!

CROM: Should you not ask him to be merciful to me. He holds a weapon in his hands.

RACHEL: He dares not use it. He hath sworn an oath—that is why I go away. Dear sir, though I have been weak and foolish, I implore you judge me not yet. I am not blindfold or helpless now. I know the man I deal with, and I fear him not. The time is not far distant when he will fear me.

CROM: You think there is no danger now?

RACHEL: Your letter will never be exposed to my Lord Willoughby.

CROM: Ha! that was the plan.

RACHEL: It is foiled.

CROM: (Laughs.) Who saith so? Your uncle and the Captain. The fly, hav'ng placed her feet within the web and breaking one mesh, casteth off her wings and followeth the spider home. Poor fly! Most cunning spider. But I am busy. Child, thou mayst go. (Turns from her and takes up despatch.)

RACHEL: If you think me wrong, advise me.

CROM: Nay, thou hast taken thine own road and must abide by it. Fare thee well!

RACHEL: (Moving to door C.) Good-bye, dear sir.

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CROM: Good-bye. (Reads letter.)

(Rachel watches him. He looks up. She comes towards him with outstretched hands. He goes past her to door and opens it.)

Go now. May the Lord have thee in His keeping.

(Exit Rachel C.)

(Stands in thought at door. Hall has grown dark.)

Poor child—poor child. Yet she hath courage and understanding. She may outwit them yet. Meantime she hath exposed the plot. My letter seized; Parliament to know naught and Willoughby all. Ha! Willoughby. A man without morality, without strength and without conviction. And yet our General. Aye, and Willoughby is not the only one among us who cowers before the King. There is my Lord Eseex. Too loyal to retreat; too timid to advance. Commander-in-Chief of all the forces of the Parliament, and holding the liberties of England in his hand. He will never beat the King because he dares not, and yet until Charles Stuart is beaten, Charles Stuart will never come to terms. There is but one way to save our liberties. Our armies must be led by men, not figureheads. Men whom no majesties d'smay; who fear naught but sin; who are religious, but whose souls are not bound down unto a creed. That is the price Parliament must pay for its success. The Lord give me power to bear my part. But for the moment—Willoughby. The peril we are in is immediate and great. If Rupert can reach Willoughby before my plans are ripe, all will be lost. I must strike with all my strength—and I must strike now.

(Enter Ralf and Charlton on gallery above. Charlton disguised as a Puritan.)

RALF: There is no one here. All is safe. (Cromwell looks up—and steps back underneath stairs. Charlton and Ralf descend.)

CHARL: Ralf, give me thy hand. (They

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clasp hands.) Thou are the best and truest friend. Yet—Gad, but thou art a fool.

RALF: I am in no danger. Cromwell desireth not your life.

CHARL: Noll! Tush, I thought not of him. But only what a foul wrong thou dost thyself by being a rebel—come away with me.

RALF: (Goes to door C.) Hist—chatter not. The horses should be waiting. (Looks out.) Not there yet. Is there a mishap? At any moment some one might come into the hall.

CHARL: Let them come. I am as proper and prim a Puritan as any in the land.

RALF: Talk not so loud.

CHARL: I will now proceed with thy political conversion.

RALF: You will make me angry.

CHARL: It is an outrage, Ralf, that thou, a man of honour, shouldst fight in company with such coistrils as Capell and Willoughby.

RALF: I serve not these.

CHARL: Ye should serve Rupert and His Gracious Majesty.

RALF: I serve Cromwell.

CHARL: 'Slife! Compare not your cropped Colonel with His Majesty King Charles.

RALF: I do not.

CHARL: By my faith, if thou hadst—much as I love thee—I would have pinked thee through.

RALF: Cromwell is a great soldier, a leader with a master mind. I compare not such as Cromwell to thy poor shadow of a King.

CHARL: Sdeath—mouth not such blasphemy to me. (Seizes sword.)

RALF: You are mad—come outside. Your voice will raise the house. (Goes up C, Charlton following.)

CHARL: (Laugh'n.) I had, indeed, forgot my cloth. Gad, old friend, had our crop-

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eared Colonel heard me, I were lost indeed.

CROM: (Stepping from staircase, leaning against it.) Your servant, Viscount.

CHARL: Hell and damnation!

CROM: Thy end, I fear, unless a change take place! So you are tired of my hospitality, my Lord.

CHARL: (With a forced laugh.) Tired enough, mine host. But that is ill said when a man hath not paid his reckoning.

CROM: I have no score against your Lordship.

CHARL: Except my life and liberty.

CROM: Your life and liberty are of no moment unto me. Where is your horse?

(Sounds of hoofs off.)

CHARL: Without.

CROM: Then mount and away.

CHARL: (Moves towards door—stops.) You play with me.

CROM: I play with no man. When next you see Prince Rupert say that the crop-eared Colonel sent thee back to him unscathed.

CHARL: 'Slife, sir, I will not be beholden for my life to thee.

CROM: I grant no favour.

CHARL: You give me release.

CROM: Because I have no further need of ye. My Lord, I have squeezed you dry.

CHARL: (Forcing a laugh. Truly, then, it but remains for me to go. (Stalks jauntily to door.) Farewell, good Ralf. Forget not my wise words. (Steps over threshold, returns.) Colonel Cromwell, we must not part thus. I have insulted you, and for revenge you set me free. Faith! I do retract my senseless words. You are what Ralf hath said—a man of honour and a gentleman. I am your servant, and your debtor. Fare you well.

(Exit C.)

(Crom. and Ralf look at one another. Hoofs heard off.)

CROM: He is gone. Go thou, too.

RALF: Go?

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CROM: Aye, go!

RALF: Whither?

CROM: After him thou lovest better than
thine honour and the cause. Go!

(Ralf comes down and they stand face to
face.)

RALF: I love you best.

CROM: I have tried thee, weighed thee
in the balance. Go!

RALF: I owed my life to Charlton—I
could not let him die.

CROM: Thou disobeyed me—for his sake.

RALF: To save his life.

CROM: Thy place is with him, and not
with me.

RALF: You are my master.

CROM: Thy master. Nay! Thou art a
cavalier—a very cavalier. Brave, but un-
stable. Ready one day to defy the might of
heaven, the next melting into tears over a
friend. Such are the men who call Charles
Stuart "His Majesty." Charles Stuart will
never conquer England, or rule Englishmen.
Though our nobility uphold him, and men
of rank and fortune follow—such blades as
Rupert and such time-servers as Hyde—
England doth not follow, and will never fol-
low. Ralf Dangerfield, thy place is with
thy friend. Thou hast not the metal or the
m'nd to stand with us.

RALF: Give me a trial now. Keep me at
your side, though it be but to untie your
shoes.

CROM: Words, words. And yet, lad, thou
hast some courage.

RALF: (Falls on one knee.) Aye, and a
loyalty to you which hath never wavered.

CROM: Kneel not to me. I claim not
kinship over any man. Rise, I say.

(Ralf rises and stands with bowed head,
which he raises gradually as Crom speaks.)

Never kneel to me, but to my Master.
(Points upward.) Thou wouldst follow me?
Thou knowst not what thou sayst. Our

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friends in Parliament, who would acknowledge Charles if he would do this or that to please them, call me arch-rebel and accurst. I stand alone. Wouldst thou, too, stand far from all the rest?

(Ralf raises his head.)

Answer not, but listen. It is a hard thing to stand apart from other men. The long sad years that have turned my heart to steel have not touched thine, for thou art young. How wilt thou bear thyself?

RALF: As becomes my father's son. He believed not in the creeds of other men, and they killed him for it. They may do the same to me for this. I will never yield.

CROM: The words ring true. But, Ralf, if thou wouldst be a support to me, thou must cast away all selfish fears and selfish loves. Thou must call no man master; thou must fall upon thy knees and worship Chr'st the Lord. Wilt, indeed, follow in that path and abide with me?

RALF: I will follow it unto the end. So help me God.

CROM: (Laying hand on Ralf's shoulder.) Then we will not part. Yet, lad, thou hast much to learn. Thou wilt presently be put unto a test. Thou goest to Stainsby with picked men. But there is one comrade thou must never trust. His dearest wish is to see thee lying dead, and so he hath digged a pitfall in thy path. Watch him; be wary, cautious and discreet when he is by. Thy courage no one can dispute. But thou art a man of impulse and hot blood, while he is cold and crafty. Ask me no questions. Thou knowest whom I mean. Here he comes.

(Enter Canell in armour, with troopers bearing torches.)

Thou, Captain. Art ready?

CAPELL: I came for the Lieutenant.

CROM: He awaits ye. March briskly, and remember thine instructions.

CAPELL: They shall be punctually obeyed.

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CROM: Then I say unto you both this one last word. Your enterprise holdeth greater issues than the taking of this house. Be upright and patient toward one another. Do your duty as soldiers and as Christians, and above all, forget not that in your hands rests the honour of the army and the safety of the cause. March!

CURTAIN.

(Three days pass.)

[END OF ACT II.]

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ACT III.

SCENE—Stainsby House.
Parliamentary Troopers discovered. Some reading pocket Bibles. All on duty.

GOODCHILD: It was an abounding mercy we took the stronghold in so swift a manner, else would the place have run with blood.

MAKE: The quarter granted by Lieutenant Dangerfield was a sin against the Almighty.

GOOD: What, Makepeace! Wouldst have wrung the prisoners' necks, then?

MAKE: I'd wring the neck of evry Papist in the land.

GOOD: But they made no resistance. Faith, we gave them little opportunity. (Laughs.)

MAKE: It matters not. The Captain's orders should have been obeyed.

GOOD: The Captain, when he said no quarter, thought my Lord would fight.

MAKE: I mean the orders given after the surrender.

GOOD: The garrison surrendered unto the Lieutenant's terms. The Captain would have flouted them and killed Lord Charlton.

MAKE: It was for the Captain to decide.

GOOD: 'Twas hard for Dangerfield to see his friends slain before his eyes.

MAKE: He is a soldier; his duty was obedience.

GOOD: The Captain hath a heart as hard as iron.

MAKE: He is a man of true religion. It is but Atheists and Malignants in disguise who show mercy unto Papists.

GOOD: Our Lieutenant is neither Atheist nor Malignant.

MAKE: He be both, and a mutineer, to boot.

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GOOD: Thou'rt a lying coistril, and were we not on duty, by the Lord, I'd drive the slander down thy throat with a pike's end.

(The men approach one another threateningly. The others gather round them.)

TROOPER: What is the dispute?

MAKE: I say the Lieutenant of ours be a traitor in disguise.

GOOD: I say it be a lie.

ALL: A lie—a lie.

MAKE: Have your way; but wait until ye hear what punishment he doth receive from my Lord Willoughby. He hath committed crimes. First, he granteth terms without authority, next he disputeth with violence when Capell commanded that the men be shot, and last he called upon such carles as ye, and threatened an attack upon the Lincolners when they came to support the Captain.

GOOD: (Laughing.) That last is true enough. Mind ye, lads, the white faces of those worsted-stocking loons when we drew sword upon them? What a scowl they had for us when they found the house was ours without a blow. And all through little Sanctify finding the secret postern.

(Enter Sanctify.)

Ha! here he comes. Hail great Sanctify, puissant Sanctify. How doth your Lordship find yourself to-day?

SANC: Well and hearty, comrade, but my clothes be all too tight.

GOOD: I see naught wrong with them.

SANC: A suit that would fit me now must have a corporal's badge upon it.

(All laugh.)

GOOD: Thou art too modest. I'd be no less than Quartermaster.

SANC: There are many Quartermasters with less experience than I.

GOOD: Hear him. He hath been in active service four and twenty hours.

((All laugh.))

SANC: I have known a man not unlike

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Makepeace in appearance serve four and twenty months an' not do what I have done.

MAKE: 'Twas a subterfuge—a skulking escapade.

SANC: Oh, a petty thing—unworthy of the attention of such great men as thee. Comrades, the grapes be wondrous sour.

(Enter Sweetlove.)

TROOP: News. What news of the Lieutenant?

SWEET: Bad. They are trying him in court-martial for insubordination; for assault; for mutiny. A halberdier within the Court tells me all goes in favour of the Captain. Dangerfield is like to suffer heavy punishment—perchance death.

SANC: He will not die. He is a friend of Cromwell's.

SWEET: Cromwell is in London.

SANC: He was when we took this stronghold. But that be two days since.

SWEET: He hath no power here.

SANC: Cromwell hath always power.

SWEET: Capell is hand and glove with my Lord Willoughby.

SANC: When thieves grow kind then honest men must mind.

SWEET: Sirrah—a hint of such language in high quarters, and thou wouldst be riding on the wooden horse.

SANC: (With mock salute.) Shall I pay a fine?

(Troopers laugh.)

SWEET: (Forcing a laugh.) Thou art a cheerful fool.

SANC: I am a very sad one, and so will his Lordship be when Cromwell comes. I speak in earnest.

SWEET: Thy meaning?

SANC: The rumour goeth, and becometh stronger hour by hour, that my Lord Willoughby dares not fight the Marquis.

SWEET: A foul lie.

SANC: I trust it be, with all my heart, but I have shrewd fears.

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SWEET: If it is truth, then I swear that I would cut his throat were he ten times a Lord.

(Chorus of Troopers.)

Aye, and any other man who harbour such a thought.

SANC: Quartermaster, thou hast my full respect. I will support thee unto death.

ALL: To the death. To the death.

(Enter Willoughby R. The men come to attention, but slowly and sullenly.)

WILL: A greeting, men. (Aside.) The dogs salute as if I had court-martialed them. Quartermaster.

SWEET: My Lord.

WILL: Take thy company without. Let one guard this door, the rest report themselves to the officer who is in charge of the removal of the ammunition.

SWEET: Aye, my Lord. (Salutes.)

(Exit with man R.)

SANC: (Aside.) Such labour suiteth not my dignity. I shall guard the door—and keep it open.

(Enter Trooper L.)

TROOP: My Lord, a lady in company with a reverend minister hath rid through the lines. The lady desires to see you on a matter of life and death.

WILL: Admit her now. (Aside.) I trust that she be fair. (Laughs.)

(Trooper exits.)

(Aside.) Our plans go well. Capell deserves much praise. He is my right hand and (Laughs.) Cromwell is away.

(Knock at door L.)

Enter.

(Enter Rachel.)

Ah, who is my visitor? My winsome visitor!

RACHEL: I fear I do intrude, my Lord.

WILL: The presence of fair women, maiden, is never an intrusion. Wouldst thou see me, eh? What can I do for thee?

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(Takes Rachel's hand and draws her to him. She steps back with a dignified gesture. He retreats a pace.)

RACHEL: I have come to ask you to do justice, sir, unto one who hath been most cruelly dealt with.

WILL: The unfortunate, whoe'er he be, could not have had a fairer advocate, or one, methinks, more likely to succeed. What—blushing! Ah, he is not a brother, eh? A little dearer than a brother, eh?

RACHEL: He is my bethrothed, my Lord. I have ridden many miles upon this quest.

WILL: Fortunate, thrice fortunate bethrothed. His name?

RACHEL: Lieutenant Dangerfield.

WILL: (Pausing.) Oh—ah—he who is under trial for mutiny.

RACHEL: Mutiny, my Lord?

WILL: Rank mutiny! He defied and then disarmed his superior officer to save the lives of a malignant garrison.

RACHEL: Were they in arms?

WILL: They had surrendered, but the Captain commanded that they should be shot.

RACHEL: Then Captain Capell would have murdered unarmed men. It is he, not the Lieutenant, who should be condemned.

WILL: Dear maid, mutiny in action admits of no excuse.

RACHEL: But, my Lord, the Lieutenant did the right.

WILL: Nay, these men were Papists, and the terms the Captain offered them before the assault was made had been scornfully refused.

RACHEL: I bow to your authority, my Lord. But from what you tell me I would have you know that dearly as I love Lieutenant Dangerfield—had he done less than strike the Captain down—I would break my vow and never touch his hand again. And because of his humanity to helpless prisoners your officers are trying him for his

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life. Save him, my Lord. (Clasping her hands.) As you are a nobleman and the Commander of this great army, stretch forth your hand and save this man. (Bursts into tears.)

WILL: Alas, dearest maiden, I have not the power you think. Yet, I will see what may be done. Be comforted and rely upon me—there—there. (Lays his hand paternally upon her head.)

(Enter Capell and Hepworth L.)

Here comes the Captain, Dangerfield's accuser. Address him in my presence on thy friend's behalf. He is a Christian and a godly soldier. Capell, this lady craves a boon. The pardon of thy Lieutenant. How goes the trial?

CAPELL: The Court considereth its verdict now, my Lord.

WILL: He is a gallant youth, I understand.

CAPELL: I say not a word against him.

WILL: He is her betrothed.

CAPELL: Betrothed! (Aside.) I crushed him not a day too soon.

HEP: My Lord, you have been cozened by some lie.

WILL: Nay, reverend sir. She herself said it, and on these points ladies seldom make mistakes.

HEP: I am her guardian. I would kill her rather than such a union should be. Rachel!

WILL: A very naughty maiden, on my oath.

(Laughs.)

RACHEL: It is quite true.

HEP: Thou shalt never marry him.

RACHEL: That is as I choose.

HEP: I hold authority over thee by law.

RACHEL: You hold it not by love.

HEP: And I will maintain it.

RACHEL: You may do your worst. I shall wed no other man.

HEP: Lord Willoughby, this youth is of loose religion and abandoned character.

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RACHEL: He is a noble-hearted gentleman, my Lord. My uncle's mind is blinded by a prejudice which an evil tongue hath wrought. Believe him not.

HEP: (Raising hand menacingly.) Be silent, wench, or I shall strike thee.

WILL: Soft, Master Presbyter, that is going too far.

RACHEL: My Lord, I leave the issue in your hands. You hold within them a man's life, a woman's heart. You will be generous. Uncle, as you hope for mercy, have mercy now.

(Exit L.)

WILL: My faith, sire, she is a queenly damosel—yet a very woman. I am truly jealous of that youth—but most inclined to treat him leniently. See to this, Capell.

CAPELL: Your Lordship is always so compassionate.

WILL: A Christian act, methinks.

HEP: A wrong unto the cause of true religion. Dost thou not know, my Lord, that this youth, a foul schismatic, is dearest friend to Charlton, the idolator.

CAPELL: There is one dearer to him even than the Viscount. Oliver Cromwell.

WILL: What is this? Doth he love Cromwell?

CAPELL: As son loves father. His affection is returned.

WILL: I knew not that.

CAPELL: Twice hath Dangerfield committed grave offences; twice hath Cromwell pardoned him. Wherefore, perchance, it would not be well to pause, my Lord—unless you desire to take example by the Colonel Cromwell.

WILL: The Lord forbid. Justice cometh before mercy. My heart may err, my judgment never.

CAPELL: The Colonel Cromwell is a soldier of repute and skill; but he hath a curious morality.

WILL: The man is coarse and blunt. He

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hath no respect for rank and family. Alas, we have too many such these days. It becomes a reproach to be a gentleman.

CAPELL: Reverend Presbyter, perchance it would be wise to show unto his Lordship the letter, writ by Cromwell, which fell into your hands by a Providential circumstance.

HEP: I swore an oath it should not leave my hands.

CAPELL: Let his Lordship see it—in your hands.

WILL: If the letter concerneth me I insist on seeing it.

HEP: (Taking out letter.) I made a promise, I would not break my word, but I must obey your Lordship. Read, sir, but touch it not.

WILL: (Reads.) What is this? He calls me coward—rake—traitor—saith I should be impeached in Parliament. A monstrous scandal. Where is he now?

CAPELL: In London, I have heard. Perchance in his place in Parliament.

WILL: He dare not raise his voice against me there. (Laughs.) Yet this letter is to St. John—a member of the Parliament. Ah! (Bites his nails.) But no matter. When he returneth here—arrest—court-martial—death. I will crush him 'neath my heel. He at least shall die.

(Enter Trooper L. Salutes.)

TROOP: Please you, my Lord, the court-martial craves your presence to hear the sentence passed on Lieutenant Dangerfield.

WILL: They must wait. Tell them to expect me in a short space.

TROOP: Aye, my Lord.

(Exit L.)

WILL: Gentlemen, I have your support?

HEP: God's blessing rest on you.

CAPELL: You are protected on all sides, my Lord.

WILL: How, sir? Protection! I command the army.

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CAPELL: I crave your Lordship's pardon. I merely meant to say that I have sounded the officers of your Council with due care, and if they do sit as a court-martial upon Cromwell, methinks they would carry out the wishes of your Lordship.

WILL: You have left no stone unturned to bring about the Colonel's ruin, eh!

CAPELL: Alas! it is most painful to me—but my duty.

WILL: Thou art a faithful servant to the cause, and shall be rewarded—if it lies within my power.

(Moves L.)

(Enter Trooper L.)

TROOP: General, my Lord Charlton doth crave an interview.

WILL: (Aside.) Rupert's friend. Friends, go ye to the Court and bring me word. I must see this prisoner.

CAPELL: Assuredly, my Lord. (Aside to Hep.) We must not leave him with that man too long.

(Exit with Hep. L.)

WILL: Cromwell my enemy! Aye, he hath the antipathy that low-bred natures feel towards gentlemen. I have scorned his malice hitherto. There I was wrong. He is much too strong for scorning. Providence hath been merciful to send me this warning of his enmity.

TROOP: My Lord, the Viscount Charlton.

(Enter Charlton, followed by Pikemen.)

WILL: Welcome, my Lord, welcome. You desire to speak to me?

CHARL: I desire a private interview.

WILL: Guards, without there for a space.

(Exit Guards.)

CHARL: We are alone?

WILL: Quite alone.

(Sanctify peeps through door R, nods his head and withdraws it, leaving door slightly open.)

CHARL: I speak, then, without reserve.

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I am your prisoner. You love me not, and would rejoice to see me dead—and yet will set me free to-day. In truth—Gad, Willoughby, I never mince my words—though I am in your hands now, to-morrow, if all's well, you'll be in mine.

WILL: Your Lordship is pleased to jest. But let it pass.

CHARL: Aye, let it pass for thy sake, not for mine. I crave a boon from you, which I will give value for to-morrow. I desire the pardon of Lieutenant Dangerfield.

WILL: (Aside.) Another champion! This youth hath as many friends as I have enemies. My Lord, you ask more than I dare grant.

CHARL: Gad, speak truth for once, man, and say you will not.

WILL: I declare I would if it were possible. Indeed, if you are very urgent, I might so somewhat even yet.

CHARL: Do it—do it. 'Sdeath! if any harm comes to him I am thine enemy for life. I will stick at naught, and thou knowest me.

WILL: It is a marvel, Viscount Charlton, that you, a nobleman, can stoop to such vital interest in a commoner.

CHARL: Pish, my Lord, sneak not in such a tone to me. Stoop, sayest thou? Let me tell thee something. This man and I were college friends. We were ever together, sharing our work and play. Yet there was a difference. While I fell headlong in debauchery, he held himself upright. When I was in debt to every tradesman round, he oft went short of food to pay a few score pounds he'd lost at dice. When there was not a pretty face in Cambridge that I did not bid for—he lived as pure as any child. Thou callest him commoner! Let me tell ye this, if such as you or I had lived as Dangerfield and Cromwell live, we

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should not be where we are to-day, fighting as rats fight for our lives.

WILL: (Aside.) Cromwell again. Enough, sir—I stir not a finger to save a friend of Cromwell's.

CHARL: (Aside.) Phew! Lieth the wind in that quarter. My Lord, I ask your mercy for this man as my friend, not Cromwell's. I love him very, very dear. He is the damndest rebel—but the best man in all England.

(Enter Capell.)

WILL: Stay, Captain. The verdict of the Court?

CAPELL: Lieutenant Dangerfield, my Lord, is condemned to death. He is to die at the hands of his own men within an hour.

WILL: A most just and proper verdict.

CHARL: It is worthy of Beelzebub himself, whose servants ye all are; and this Captain his familiar. Lord Willoughby, you have still an opportunity. Show now a spirit worthy of your rank. This sentence still requireth your confirmation as Commander-in-Chief. Grant my prayer.

CAPELL: (In Will's ear.) Cromwell's friend, my Lord.

WILL: Aye, aye. Charlton, this man dies. I will countersign the warrant now.

(Goes to table, takes pen, handed to him by Capell. Signs.)

CHARL: (Moving L.) Then 'tis over. But mark well. By this vile sentence on an honest man you do not only take a life unjustly, but strike a death-blow at the cause you swore to save. Your ministers know less of toleration than the worst of ours. Jealousy fills the hearts of your Commanders. All this spells ruin. If greater men and better counsels prevail not in your midst, your Parliament will miserably die. And as for ye—wait until I meet ye in the battle-field.

(Exit L.)

WILL: A most truculent young gentle-

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man. Tush, let him go. (Aside.) Yet I could wish he were not so much a favourite with Rupert.

CAPELL: He speaks too soon, my Lord.

WILL: Nay, he must be released at the hour stated. I dare not break my word.

CAPELL: He shall be, but he hath some lonely country to traverse ere he reaches friends, and sometimes travellers are killed, and sometimes 'tis as well.

WILL: You would be a murderer.

CAPELL: I would serve your Lordship! (Bows.)

WILL: I will be no party to such atrocity. Charlton must go safely. Yet, ah!—if it could be that he reached not Rupert, it would be a providential circumstance.

(Exit.)

(Enter Sanctify R.)

CAPELL: (Moving L. Aside.) The conscience of this man is a most precious thing. He would do no wrong; but if that wrong were done he would give thanks unto the Lord.

(Exit L.)

SANC: When thieves grow kind, then honest men must mind. The truest word I ever spake, and I speak naught but truth. Poor Lieutenant Dangerfield. His proud spirit and his love of Papists hath been his ruin. He was in the right; the Captain wrong, but though he hath justice on his side the Captain hath the law. The Mistress Rachel's heart will break at this. Women never understand the law. And after all is over Cromwell will come and break the Captain's back. Thank the Lord for that. But, alas! this will not bring the Lieutenant back to life.

(Enter messenger spent with riding, splashed with blood; arm hanging useless; cut across his face.)

MESS: My Lord Willoughby! I want my Lord!

(Groans and falls into chair.)

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SANC: Friend, 'tis the privilege of common men to want, and of Lords to make them wait. Lord Willoughby is busy; but thou art in a sorry plight.

MESS: I am fainting—bring me water.

(Sanc fills cup of wine from table. Mess drinks it at a gulp.)

MESS: Ha! I feel a man again.

SANC: Now, what news?

MESS: My news is for his Lordship's ear alone.

SANC: Thou canst not see him. Tell me—I am his most trusted servant.

MESS: I know thee not. Nay, I will go myself.

SANC: Man, it is impossible. There is a court-martial sitting. Give me thy confidence; I am of Colonel Cromwell's private household. Dost not trust him?

MESS: Aye, we all trust Cromwell. Harken, then. (Whispers.) But five miles away, creeping softly as a tiger on its prey, with the great Marquis and Rupert in command, is the army of the King, five thousand strong.

SANC: The Almighty! We're lost.

MESS: You would have been if I had not escaped. But I rode for it through a fire as hot as hell. There is still time. They go not quickly, believing us to be quite unprepared. My Lord hath victory within his power.

SANC: Then go thou to him. Take more wine.

(Gives it to him. Mess drinks.)

Now go with all thy speed.

(Exit Messenger L.)

SANC: (Comes down.) Lord Willoughby hath victory within his power. But he hath neither power nor will. What said Cromwell in that letter? Coward—traitor. Cromwell knew. Cromwell! With Cromwell absent, ruin! With Cromwell here—and Cromwell's regiment—I have it. I will away to

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find him—and my Lord Willoughby's best horse shall carry me.

(Exit R.)

(Enter Ralf, guarded by Musketeers.)

RALF: Halt, good fellows. Let me await his Lordship's answer here.

(Sergeant of guards salutes.)

SERG: Aye, Lieutenant.

RALF: Sergeant, I wish to thank you and your men for kindest courtesy. God preserve you all.

SERG: We would offer our lives, sir—every one of us—if the Court would take them 'stead of yours.

MEN: Aye, aye.

RALF: I deserve not such loyalty. Yet ye know I would do the same for you.

MEN: We know—we know.

RALF: Thy hands, lads.

(Shakes hands all round.)

Now, am I ready for my fate. When you get the word to fire let there be no faltering from your love for me. Remember ye are soldiers. Remember I die because I did forget, for a brief space, that I was a soldier. Do not ye forget.

(Enter Rachel L.)

Ah, she comes. My Lord hath granted my last wish. Rachel, Rachel. (Comes down.)

(Men retire up stage. Serg wiping his eyes.)

RACHEL: (Breathless, taking Ralf's hands.) It is not true. Tell me it is not true.

RALF: It is true, my darling.

RACHEL: Then I die, too. They shall shoot us both.

RALF: Nay, speak not so. Be calm, be brave—be yourself. Perchance I should not have asked to see you. But I could not die without one more glimpse of her who taught me how to live.

RACHEL: They are murderers.

RALF: Hush. They have done their duty and condemned me justly.

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RACHEL: You did right.

RALF: I did commit the crime which cannot be forgiven to a soldier. Mutiny.

RACHEL: It was in a most righteous cause.

RALF: Aye!

RACHEL: Then are you unjustly punished.

RALF: Nay. In an army there are laws that no man may break and live. I set them all at naught.

RACHEL: Ah, but why—why? It was to save helpless women and unarmed men from slaughter, and to keep the honour of our army stainless in the sight of men. All this you have done, and the very men who should thank you for it order your execution. I say it is not just.

RALF: It was their duty. I did right in the sight of God, and will account unto Him for all. But even as I did it, darling, I knew that it meant death. Will you forgive me, sweet? It means much suffering for you—for you do need me, the only person in the world who needs me. Yet you would not, I know you would not, wish me to do aught but that which I felt was right.

RACHEL: (Resting her hands upon his shoulder.) I forgive you? I—forgive—you. Oh, Ralf, this moment, with all its agony, is one that lifteth me above all other women in the world. You love me—you who have done your duty in the face of death and worse. You deign to love me. I am so honoured, dearest, that through all the years to come I shall not mourn my loss so much as I shall endeavour to live worthily for your sake. I see all now. You are more than lover unto me: a hero—martyr—who to do the right brought on himself the worst disgrace and obliquy a soldier knows. Fear not. I will be brave. I should not be worthy to look into your face if I did flinch. Good-bye, beloved.

(Laying her hands on his shoulders and kissing him on the forehead.)

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May our dear Lord, Who died for all men, as you die for these, accept ye as his own, and let me follow you in His own good time—good-bye.

RALF: My darling—oh, my darling! But I must go. Men, your duty.

(Tears himself away, signs to men, who fall in about him.)

(Exit, waving his hand at door R. Rachel stands watching him as if turned to stone.

When the door closes behind him she starts forward as if to follow, with a cry. Stops at the sound of Capell's voice off L.)

CAPELL: By this man's death, my Lord, we lose a dangerous enemy.

(Enter Willoughby and Capell. Rachel turns and draws herself up, and as they come down moves slowly to meet them.)

WILL: The fair Rachel. We shall have a scene.

RACHEL: Your Lordship knoweth not a woman. My heart is cold and pulseless. When those guns do their work it will be dead.

WILL: Comfort thee, sweet maid. Thou wilt have many lovers. Thou hast one here. (Laying hand on heart.)

RACHEL: Dare not to utter such a word to me. Thou lettest th's man die because thou art a coward. The time will come when all men will curse thee for thy cowardice. For you (Turning to Capell.) I have another word. The punishment that is dealt unto the wicked hangs above your head. You have succeeded so far; but the end is near. You smile. You think you have me in your power. Then may God help you, sir. (Moves L.)

(Outside is heard Serg's voice. Rachel slowly falls on her knees and prays. Sound of galloping hoofs, growing gradually louder.)

SERG: Prisoner, art thou ready?

RALF: Quite ready.

SERG: Men, make ready to fire.

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(Click of muskets.)

RALF: Keep cool, my lads.

SERG: Present.

(Rachel gives another cry. Will and Capell look at one another.)

CROM: (Heard off.) Halt! Down muskets on your lives.

(A cheer from Troopers and cries of "God bless the Colonel.")

Take your prisoner to the guard room.

RACHEL: God hath heard my prayer.

WILL: Our plans are all undone.

CAPELL: Hisht! my Lord, or she will hear you. Courage. If by some chance Cromwell should know of the advance of the King's army, order not his arrest until you know that it is safe. Courage. The officers will be upon your side.

(Enter Cromwell.)

WILL: Greeting, worthy Colonel.

CROM: I trust I am in time.

WILL: All hath gone well.

CROM: Your Lordship's pardon. I have this moment stayed a murder. That was not well.

WILL: Your Lieutenant was condemned by a court-martial for a mutiny which he confessed.

CROM: I am his Colonel, yet only heard of this by chance. It was foul play, my Lord.

WILL: Such words to me!

CROM: This is no time to measure words. But a truce. I have heard grave tidings.

WILL: (As'ide.) Lord! how hath he heard?

CROM: Doubtless your Lordship knoweth of them, and art suitably prepared.

WILL: Alas! the Marquis is upon us in overwhelming strength.

CROM: He hath halted on the way. We have ample time to spring upon him.

WILL: Impossible, good Colonel.

CROM: It is of necessity, my Lord, and therefore to be done.

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WILL: Do you or I command this army, Colonel Cromwell.

CROM: The chief responsibility is yours, my Lord, no more!

WILL: I have ordered a retreat.

(Enter officers.)

Here comes my officer.

OFFICER: My Lord, the Colonel Cromwell's troop have heard the news, and say they'll mutiny before they do retreat.

CROM: Hearken, my Lord, hearken. There is a deep significance in that.

WILL: There is insubordination—treason!

CROM: The treason rests not with the rank and file.

CAPELL: My Lord, would it please you to call a council of the officers? They might satisfy the Colonel.

WILL: A most wise and proper course. They will be in the chamber where they tried Lieutenant Dangerfield. Bring them unto us.

CAPELL: With all speed, my Lord.

(Exit L.)

RACHEL: (Moving down R. to Crom.) Thank the Lord for your presence, sir.

CROM: My child, you here? What does this mean?

RACHEL: I came hither with my uncle. You will not let him die?

CROM: Who—thine uncle?

RACHEL: I mean Ralf—my Ralf.

CROM: Your Ralf—ha! Well, rest satisfied there shall be full trial.

WILL: That hath been given.

CROM: My Lord, the Court hath been misled. Methinks they should have tried another man.

(Enter Capell and officers.)

Depart now, Rachel. Justice shall be done.

RACHEL: I have full faith in God's mercy and your strength.

(Exit.)

(Cromwell and officers salute one another in silence. Officers take seats at table. Will

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at the head, Crom at the foot, Capell at Will's right.)

WILL: I have called this council on the gravest issue. The enemy advanceth some five thousand strong. We must now decide the course we shall pursue. In my judgment a retreat is the inevitable. Colonel Cromwell thinketh otherwise. Give us your minds.

COL. S: We shall be cut in pieces if we attempt dispute.

COL. F: Verily a battle would be a sinful waste of life.

CROM: There be at least one thousand men who would gladly give their lives.

WILL: We have not sunk so low that we must look for an example from our men.

CROM: Methinks there will be small opportunity for them to look for one from us.

BROCK: This Royal army will be all veterans.

CROM: I know some poor men, sir, who dared to beat those veterans once, and will again.

CAPELL: Few can attempt what the Colonel Cromwell saith his men have dared.

CROM: Thou, Capell, I mind me, wast not one who dared.

STRICK: We should retreat to Cambridge, and there fortify.

CROM: It would be madness, sir.

FAIR: Nay, the finger of the Lord doth point that way.

CROM: Our place is in the field, not sheltered behind walls. We must arrest the march of this army upon London.

STRICK: An' we be annihilated by the Marquis, the last barrier 'tween London and the enemy were swept away. The madness is yours, Cromwell.

FAIR: Hath the godly Colonel any counter-plan?

CROM: Nay, sirs; if you have no will to fight, what boots it I should tell you how to fight?

STRICK: We lack not will, but means.

CROM: Ye have two thousand and five

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hundred men. You know the country. Newcastle doth not. A swift march before he hath time to put his army in battalia; a brisk charge of cavalry; a flank attack heartily delivered, and the day is yours.

FAIR: What saith my Lord to this?

WILL: The Colonel's words are brave enough; but they are only words.

CROM: I will translate them into action if you give command. Lead us, and we follow.

WILL: I do say they are too strong for us. We must retreat.

CROM: Retreat whither? We have no reserves to help us in the counties. They will but provide plunder for our enemies. Were I in league, my Lord, with Charles or with his Generals, I could not devise a better scheme than this retreat—for them.

FAIR: There be some sense in what the Colonel says.

STRICK: I would rather fortify a town.

CROM: And see the country round you all laid waste. Nay, such a coward's act would ill suit you, good Strickland.

WILL: We are not cowards, sir. Pray mend your words.

CROM: The words that be on my tongue, my Lord, are of such heat I dare hardly speak at all. Yet will I speak. Comrades, your strength is leaving you; your hearts have turned to water, and your faith hath gone. Your knees tremble before this army, and your faces blanch because ye turn your backs upon the Lord. Arouse ye from this stupor of despair. Our cause is the Almighty's—cannot He protect His own? Ye have one thing to dread and only one—

(Turning slowly upon Capell and Will.)
The men whose tongues are cloven, and whose hearts are false. Be but true unto yourselves, as once ye were, and all may yet go well.

STRICK: D'd we feel the cause demanded it, we would fight and die, if need be, as readily as ye.

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CROM: Then prove it, sir.

WILL: Not for your taunts. You cast foul insult in our faces, and expect that we shall do your will.

CROM: I have insulted none, my Lord, but traitors.

CAPELL: A word—I crave a word.

WILL: Speak freely, Captain.

CAPELL: The words of Colonel Cromwell touch us all.

ALL: Aye.

CAPELL: And I for one should think that he were right—if I could trust him.

OFFICERS: Not trust the Colonel Cromwell?

CAPELL: Nay, and you would not, gentlemen, if you knew what hath lately come unto my knowledge.

WILL: Bravely and most truly said.

CROM: Proof, Capell, and that instantly. What dost thou know?

FAIR: Aye, and I should expect some other witness to confirm this statement before I did lose my trust in the godly Colonel Cromwell.

CAPELL: There be a witness I could procure, sirs. A witness most favourably disposed unto the Colonel.

STRICK: Name him. We will judge his worth.

CAPELL: Mistress Rachel Fullerton, niece to Presbyter Hepworth.

BROCK: A woman? We want no women here.

CAPELL: A lady of repute. The Colonel will not deny my words.

CROM: I have no objection to the maiden as a witness.

WILL: I can swear she favours not the Captain. Call her in.

CROM: Without there!

(Enter Sanctify.)

Ask Mistress Rachel to attend the Council.

SANC: Aye, Colonel. (Aside.) My Lord

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and his faithful Captain would cover up their evil deeds with rose leaves. They forget a rose hath thorns.

(Exit.)

CROM: Capell, thou playest with fire. Think well before you strike—think well!

CAPELL: I can but do my duty, sir.

(Enter Rachel R.)

WILL: (Rising.) Madam, we crave your presence. Words hath passed between two gentlemen. You are to hold the scales like a fair justice. I beg you answer a few questions without fear or prejudice.

RACHEL: I will do my best, my Lord.

WILL: We thank you. Captain, proceed.

CAPELL: Remember you holding converse with me once touching a letter written by the Colonel Cromwell?

RACHEL: I remember.

CAPELL: Afterwards you read the letter.

RACHEL: It was shown to me.

CAPELL: What did it contain?

RACHEL: (Turning to Cromwell.) Must I answer him?

CROM: Speak the truth, child, and fear not anything.

RACHEL: It accused my Lord Willoughby of cowardice.

OFFICERS: He called the General a coward?

CROM: It is true—go on.

RACHEL: It saith he lived an evil life.

CROM: Quite true.

RACHEL: And concluded with the statement that My Lord was a traitor to the cause.

OFFICERS: My Lord a traitor—shame!

CROM: True both in meaning and in fact.

WILL: You hear, gentlemen. He doth admit the writing of these lies.

CROM: They are not lies.

WILL: Fairest maiden, thou hast done me a service I will remember all my life. You may now withdraw.

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RACHEL: Your pardon, my Lord, I have something I would tell these gentlemen.

WILL: Nay, we have no time.

CROM: Speak, Rachel, to the point, and leave us. And then, my Lord (Rising.) the Council shall hear me.

RACHEL: I wish, sirs, to tell you of this man. (Pointing to Capell.) He filched from my care, by meanest subterfuge, the letter you have heard. He drew me from the protection of Colonel Cromwell's roof by another trick, and, to screen himself he calls me as witness against the man I do most honour and revere. Sirs, he is a Judas in your ranks, and as he hath dealt with me, so will he deal by you.

(Exit R.)

SANC: (Aside, opening door for her.) The rose was sweet, but the thorn pricked deep.

CAPELL: Gentlemen, grant me a word. This maiden beareth me a bitter grudge. The man you condemned—and whom the Colonel hath reprieved without your knowledge—is her betrothed.

OFFICERS: Reprieved! The prisoner reprieved!

WILL: Aye, and behind your backs. Now return ye unto the problem of retreat or no retreat. Choose between my word and this enemy of mine.

CROM: Aye, sirs. That is the strictness of the question. My Lord, as ye have sown, so shall ye reap. Ye place your word against mine own? So be it. Then, Lord Willoughby of Parham, Sergeant Major General of this army. I do accuse thee of dealings with Prince Rupert, the Marquis of Newcastle and Charles Stuart himself. Thou art a traitor and a renegade.

(Officers leap to their feet and support Willoughby and exclaim: "A lie—proof—shame!")

WILL: (Laying his hand on his heart.) Gentlemen, upon my honour as a peer of

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England; upon my faith as Christian, I swear that is all a tissue of black and shameless falsehood.

CROM: (Taking despatch from doublet.) The Almighty be thy judge and mine. Seest this letter, sirs? It was found upon the Royalist Viscount Charlton, and is a letter of instruction from the King to Rupert. I will read the words with which it doth conclude: "Take no action until you hear from Willoughby. You may trust him now. He hath learnt at last on whose side his interest lies. Charles, Rex."

(All turn upon Willoughby, who grinds his teeth.)

WILL: A forgery—conspiracy—he writ it all himself.

CROM: Whose seal is that, Lord Willoughby?

ALL: The King's—the King's.

CROM: The Council will now say whose word it doth believe.

(All turn from Willoughby and mutter: "Dastard—traitor." Willoughby tries to speak and to meet Cromwell's eye, but shrinks before him.)

STRICK: (Laying hand on sword.) Such a foul thing as thee be not fit to live.

CROM: (Stepping between them.) Hold, sir. Judgment is for God. Punishment for Parliament. We have other work. Hark! Hark!

(Faint tramp of feet and trumpet calls heard in the distance.)

FAIR: Heaven be merciful to us. It is the enemy.

STRICK: And now, thanks unto my Lord, it be all too late to fight!

CROM: (Striking table with his fist.) Who dares to say too late?

STRICK: Our army is at Boston, five miles away.

CROM: Would you dispute Newcastle if you had the army here?

ALL: Aye, aye.

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CROM: (Steps to window—draws curtain.)
Then, behold it, sirs.

(Troops drawn up in rank off. When they see Cromwell they cheer.)

WILL: Aye, cheer him, like unto like!
He suits such low-born churls as ye—make
him your General.

STRICK: My Lord speaks well. Long
live the man who hath saved the cause.
Long live General Cromwell.

ALL: (Drawing swords and raising them
above their heads.) Our leader—our leader.
Long live the General.

(Cheering of men off. Cromwell salutes in
silence.)

[END OF ACT III.]

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ACT IV.

SCENE—Entrance Hall, Cromwell's House.
Group of Parliamentary Officers Discovered.

They have just ridden in. Servant
moves about handing wine.

STRICK: Hath the General Cromwell
been informed of our arrival.

SERV: A trooper hath rid to find him,
sir.

STRICK: The General riseth early.

SERV: It is seldom that he sleepeth after
four.

FAIR: A willing spirit and an iron frame.
He is a leader beyond price.

STRICK: Naught but the stiffness of his
regiment saved the day at Stainsby Moor.

BROCK: Well may Rupert call him Iron-
sides.

FAIR: Aye, and he upholdeth justice and
strict discipline.

STRICK: Hardly that, good Colonel, else
had Dangerfield been executed.

FAIR: The youth will die to-day.

STRICK: But Cromwell reprieved him.

FAIR: Cromwell knew that Dangerfield's
accuser was unfaithful to the cause.

BROCK: The godly Captain?

FAIR: Call him not godly. He was in
league with Willoughby, and will be tried
by Parliament for treason.

STRICK: Cromwell loveth Dangerfield
too well to let him be condemned.

FAIR: You do him injustice. Besides,
fresh evidence hath come to light proving
beyond doubt that the Lieutenant is a
traitor.

STRICK: The evidence. Let us hear the
evidence.

FAIR: Ye will hear all at the trial. The
youth hath no chance of life. None may
move Cromwell when he is resolved.

(Enter servant R.)

SERV: Gentlemen, breakfast is served.

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(Officers move R. Rachel and Betty appear on gallery).

STRICK: We are all agreed, sirs? Dangerfield must die.

ALL: Aye, aye.

(Exit officers.)

(Rachel and Betty come down.)

RACHEL: Harken to that. These soldiers are thirsting for Ralf's blood. This war doth turn men into brutes.

BETTY: Say birds, my dear. The godly Colonels are for all the world like owls—as ugly and as stupid.

RACHEL: So much the worse for Ralf.

BETTY: They have yet to reckon with my father.

RACHEL: I saw him yesternight, and besought him on my knees for word of hope. He would give me none.

BETTY: Did he bid you despair.

RACHEL: He closed his lips and shook his head—you know the gesture—and said that justice must be done.

BETTY: Then, dearest, dearest, be of good cheer. He can compass anything he will.

RACHEL: You understand me not. I know that if he wills it all may yet be well. But what if he does not wish that Ralf should live. You do not know, dear—pray you never may—what this word mutiny doth mean to soldiers. Ralf tells me there is no hope—no hope.

BETTY: Pooh! Throw not Ralf's words at me. He knoweth naught.

RACHEL: I have lost all hope.

(Enter Hepworth C.)

But see, my uncle cometh. Go, dear heart.

BETTY: If you had not lost your wits for love of Ralf you would see in your uncle's frown a forecast of good fortune. But you are blind—blind. (Moves L. C. Aside.) I do my best to cheer her, but in truth I have lost heart myself. I have never seen father treat a man so sternly as he treats Ralf Dangerfield.

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HEP: Niece, I desire serious converse with you.

BETTY: She will now be told of all her sins.

HEP: I came not to speak of sin.

BETTY: Then your face, sir, doth you grievous wrong.

HEP: You are grossly impertinent. Be gone!

BETTY: (With mock courtesy.) I humbly crave your pardon; but I spoke the truth, and if I had a mirror for you to look upon I'd prove it.

(Exit L. C.)

HEP: Niece, since we last met I have been to London and consulted the greatest of our lawyers. I find that thou canst not marry any man unless I give consent; and that it rests with me to decide where thou shalt live. Furthermore, that if thou dost defy me I can have thee seized on a warrant and thrown into a prison.

RACHEL: Before my father died you told him you would be a father unto me. Had he known how you would keep your word he would not have given you this power.

HEP: Thine own conduct hath forced me to the issue. Either thou leavest this house and reside with me, or I have thee arrested.

RACHEL: I shall not live with you.

HEP: Then take thy punishment. I feared thou wouldst be obstinate, wherefore I came prepared. Here is the warrant. (Showing parchment.) But submit and drive me not unto extremities.

RACHEL: I shall appeal unto General Cromwell, as I had to do before.

HEP: 'Tis useless, for I have the protection of the law. See here.

(Goes to door, throws it open and beckons. Enter two Sheriff's officers, C.)

HEP: Niece, once more I bid thee yield.

RACHEL: I will not.

(Enter Sanctify Jordan and two troopers R.)

HEP: Officers—your duty.

OFFICER: Madam, I must arrest you in

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the name of King and Parliament.

RACHEL: If you touch me, sir, I shall call for aid.

SANC: And not in vain. Men, stand to your arms.

HEP: Soldiers, beware! Thou hast to do with men armed with powers of law.

SANC: 'Struth, we have faced worse on the battlefield. Be ready, men.

OFFICER: I am acting on a warrant.

SANC: (Taking warrant and running his sword through it.) So much for thy warrant. Pigskin is no protection against steel, good sir! (Hands it back with mock bow.)

HEP: Officers, convey this lady to the coach.

(Officers advance on Rachel.)

SANC: Men, convey these gentlemen without the door.

(Troopers seize officers and run them outside.)

HEP: Thou hast committed a serious offence, Corporal.

SANC: Touch her, and you will follow, sir.

HEP: I will report thee to the General.

(Enter Cromwell C.)

SANC: Methinks the reporting shall be done by me.

CROM: There hath been unseemly conduct here, Sanctify.

SANC: There hath indeed, General. But for my presence an assault would have been made by those men upon the Mistress Rachel.

HEP: They are Sheriff's officers, acting by my instructions.

CROM: Thou hast taken most unnecessary trouble, sir. Corporal, dismiss your men and close the door. Remain yourself with'n. Rachel, what is the dispute?

RACHEL: My uncle desires me to reside with him in London. I will go to prison before I do consent.

CROM: Thy reason.

RACHEL: It concerneth Captain Capell.

CROM: Capell!

HEP: I have naught to do with him;

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mention not his name.

RACHEL: You commanded me to wed the Captain.

CROM: Presbyter, didst contemplate that outrage? Explain thyself!

HEP: I have naught to explain. All that is past. Niece, our controversy shall end. Live where and with whom you please.

(Moves toward door C.)

CROM: Corporal, guard the door.

HEP: I wish to pass out. Stand aside.

CROM: Return.

HEP: I desire to dismiss the officers.

CROM: Return or I arrest you on a serious charge.

HEP: (Coming down.) I am a minister of Gospel.

CROM: Wherefore the crime thou hast committed is without palliation or excuse.

HEP: You don't know of what you speak.

CROM: I know too well. Rachel, tell me all.

RACHEL: After I had given your letter to the Captain my uncle came with him and commanded that I leave your house, and saying that if I disobeyed your letter should be taken unto Lord Willoughby.

CROM: Reverent sir, methinks thou feel'st faint. How pale thou art. Thy very lips are white. Presbyter, the truth!

HEP: I have fallen. I can fall no further. Cromwell, thou shalt have the truth. Know, then, that I promised Rachel should marry Captain Capell if he brought about your ruin. God knows I was not willing. But I thought the cause of true religion made your downfall most imperative, and he would take no other price. Now thou knowest all. Do what you will. I deserve no mercy and I ask for none.

CROM: The bolt ye forged between you was heavy and well aimed. But God made it harmless. Enough of this. Thou hast confessed. But thou must make a heavy sacrifice.

HEP: I will make any sacrifice.

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CROM: Then you will consent unto such terms as I may lay upon you.

HEP: Name them.

CROM: At my own time.

HEP: I desire to go away.

CROM: We need you here. Retire into my library with your niece. I have business with my officers. Then I shall need you.

HEP: I must do your bidding. Come, Rachel, if you will consent to be alone with me.

RACHEL: Uncle, I will gladly go with you.

(Exit with Hepworth L. C.)

CROM: Sanctify, inform the officers that I await them.

SANC: (Salutes.) Aye, General. (Moves down R.) Would I might read the fate of our Lieutenant from his face, but it is a mask of iron.

(Exit R.)

CROM: (Walking up and down.) The plot's at end. The men who planned it be helpless in my hands and the enemy hath been defeated in the field. By the end of this campaign we shall command the North from Humber to Tyne. This should awake the South and Charles be forced to sue for terms. Yet this will not come at once. The King is stubborn and intrigues with foreign Courts. The Scots care too much for creed and covenant; while of our own people how few fight for the Lord, how many for themselves. But if we pass onward steadfastly we cannot fail. We have drawn the sword for liberty. We must not sheathe it until liberty be won. Peace. Peace! Nay, there shall be no peace. I will never rest, nor let others rest until freedom smiles upon our land; until just laws govern us; until every man, however lowly in estate, hath power and opportunity to worship God as his conscience doth dictate, and live as becomes an Englishman.

(Enter Madam Cromwell on gallery C.)

(Aside.) My mother comes. I know her

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errand. The fate of our poor lad troubleth her sore. (Goes upstirs.) Mother, you must not descend alone; these stairs are steep. (Takes her arm within his own.)

MADAM C: Tut! My infirmity is not so great as that. If I lean upon thee it is more from pleasure than from need. I like to lean on thee, dear son.

CROM: Yet you have come to chide me.

MADAM C: I have not spake a word.

CROM: I read it in your face.

MADAM C: There are few faces that thou dost not read. But tell me, Oliver—I know those officers of thine will be here in briefest space—what will become of Ralf—Ralf, whom I love better—may the Lord forgive me—than I love my grandsons.

CROM: The issue resteth with the court-martial.

MADAM C: They will condemn him unto death?

CROM: I fear they will.

MADAM C: And then—what will thou say to it?

CROM: I must confirm the sentence.

MADAM C: Thou wilt do—what?

CROM: Confirm the sentence.

MADAM C: Then I will never call thee “son” again.

CROM: Mother!

MADAM C: Silence! Think not to deal with me as thou doest deal with men. I am thy mother, and, old and broken as I am, my strength all gone, my limbs palsied and my eyes grown dim, yet, Oliver, I am thy mother still.

CROM: Be calm.

MADAM C: Silence! It is thou, not this petty ring of soldiers, who holdeth this man's life. He hath mutinied, ye say, and that's a hanging matter. Oh ye men—ye purblind men! that would destroy the best among ye for a few written words ye call a military code. He mutinied, thank God for that! The grandson of my Ralf could do no less. So doth the eaglet treat a carrion crow—thy precious Captain whom at last

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ye have found out. Had Ralf not mutinied, would he have been fit to lead thy troop? Would he have crushed those cavaliers? Would Stanisby fight be thine? Answer.

CROM: Mother, you know not what you say. I, too, love Ralf. He hath many faults, but yet such rare qualities that he standeth upright before his God—a man. But though I love him; nay, because I love him, I must look neither to the right nor to the left, but keep only one thought in my mind—justice. He hath broke a law. If others broke it our army would crumble into bits, and our cause be lost forever. Why should he not suffer? There may be a reason. But it shall not be because I love him. We must do the right, dear mother, and leave the issue unto God.

MADAM C: Oliver, I knew not to whom I spoke. I thought of thee only as the son I bore five and forty years ago. Now I see thee as thou art. Thy soul soareth far above mine own. Indeed, my son, thou knowest best. I leave it in your hands.

CROM: So that I have your blessing, mother, I am well content.

MADAM C: Thou hast it, dearest son.

(Madam C. moves up stairs onto gallery. Enter officersR.)

CROM: A welcome, gentlemen.

FAIR: We thank you, General for your hospitality.

CROM: Then let us speedily unto the business of the day. Corporal, inform Lieutenant Dangerfield that we require his presence.

(They take their seats at table L, Cromwell at the head.)

(Enter Ralf, guarded by Pikemen.)

CROM: Lieutenant Dangerfield, by order of the convener of th's court-martial, I call upon you to show cause, if thou canst, why the sentence passed upon you at Stainsby House should not be executed.

RALF: I can show no cause but one. I do admit the mutiny, but plead that as the alternative was a massacre of unarmed men, I had no choice.

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STRICK: Your duty was obedience.

RALF: My conscience forbade me to stand by and see a murder done.

FAIR: If your argument were allowed to stand no commander would maintain his authority a day. He would ever have to submit his actions to the approval of his men. It is no argument.

CROM: Doth the Court reject the plea?

ALL: Aye, aye.

RALF: I have no other.

CROM: Then the former ruling holdeth good—unless the prisoner can show proof of valiant service to the cause, when the Court might modify his sentence.

(Deep hum of approval from troopers.)

RALF: I crave the pardon of the Court, but I shall not so waste its time. I ask for justice, not for mercy. If you deem that justice doth demand my death, I place my life at your disposal as freely as when I ventured it upon the field and met the King's troopers in the charge.

(Loud murmur of approval from soldiers.)

CROM: Silence!

FAIR: The prisoner's words are grateful to the ear, but we be not free agents in this matter. We are here to carry out the code of military law. There is but one punishment for mutiny and treason, and that punishment is death.

(Officers murmur assent.)

CROM: I may not gainsay the sentence. (Sob from Betty on gallery.) But before I do confirm it I desire the Court to hear a witness who hath ridden many miles to give his evidence. The Viscount Charlton is here under a safe conduct from the Commander-in-Chief. Will the Court hear him?

FAIR: How can we take the word of one notoriously in favor of the prisoner.

CROM: Ye may trust his word. But that no doubts shall find a place in any mind I will confront him with Dangerfield's accuser. Corporal, request the Viscount to attend the Court, and then bring in thy prisoner.

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(Sanctify salutes and exits C. Doors then open. Enter Lord Charlton and two cavaliers.

TROOPER: My Lord the Viscount Charlton.

(Enter Capell, bound, guarded by troopers with swords drawn.)

CHARL: Your servant, General Cromwell.

CROM: We thank you, my Lord, for your presence here. I should inform you that Lieutenant Dangerfield is condemned, but execution of his sentence waits until the Court have heard what your Lordship hath to say.

CHARL: Thank God, then, I'm in time. Sirs, you have condemned an honest man. I come not as an enemy to-day, but appeal unto ye as to Englishmen who love justice and fear God. This man is innocent. Indeed, ye owe him thanks for what he did. I had a right to quarter.

FAIR: That we do deny.

CHARL: I will prove it from the written words of yonder Captain. Here, General, are the terms he offered me before the assault began.

CROM: (Reading.) Captain Capell demandeth the surrender of Stainsby House within two hours.

CHARL: Lieutenant Dangerfield—alack that I must own it—reduced it within one.

CROM: In that event, if no blood were shed, quarter was to be given unto all.

FAIR: There was dispute and loss of godly lives?

CHARL: Alas! sir, I am compelled to tell you we had no such fortune—I mean such a disaster was averted.

CROM: Captain Capell, dost thou deny his Lordship's words?

CAPELL: I have naught to say.

CHARL: That is well for you. A pity you ever spake at all.

STRICK: His Lordship puts a new complexion on affairs.

FAIR: Stay. My Lord Charlton, thou

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hast put thy head into the lion's mouth by coming here. General, I pray you call as witness before the Court Reuben Sweetlove, Quartermaster in your first troop.

CROM: Sweetlove, stand forth—and speak the truth.

SWEET: Please the honourable Court, when I was in charge of the prisoners after Stainsby House was taken, I overheard the Viscount say unto Sir Richard Greville, who standeth now beside him, these words: "Dangerfield hath done the King good service. I will commend him unto Rupert. He should be loved by all true cavaliers and treated as a friend.

CROM: Wilt swear to this upon thine oath?

CHARL: No need for that. My faith, the fellow hath a wondrous memory. I said all this and more.

FAIR: Then doth the prisoner stand condemned as traitor by his own best friend.

CHARL: Soft, good sir, soft! I spake these words; but not with the meaning that you graft upon them. What I meant then—what I mean now—is that by the act which I have described to you, and which cannot be denied, Dangerfield deserved well of his King, of Rupert, my Commander, of all true cavaliers and of all true Englishmen. Alas! he is not a cavalier. He is the sternest rebel that I know. But he is a brave and honest man and a worthy soldier in your cause. I now leave it, gentlemen, to you to say whether I have not spoke the truth.

CROM: The Court must now give judgment.

CHARL: One last word, gentlemen. I hear a message from my royal master, His Majesty King Charles.

(Cavaliers uncover. Some Parliament officers also, until they see that Cromwell does not move.)

His Majesty, God bless h'm, commandeth me to say that as ye were his subjects once, and when this sad war doth end may be

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again, he would ask a favour at your hands—the pardon of your Lieutenant for his breach of discipline. If ye will do this act ye will lay His Majesty under an obligation which at some fitting opportunity he will graciously discharge.

CAVALIERS: God save the King.

CROM: Touching the message that the King hath been pleased to send us, I do thank His Majesty. (Raising his hat.) Sirs, your judgment.

STRICK: I say let the sentence be revoked.

CROM: I will take your votes. Those of a like opinion unto this say "Aye."

OFFICERS: Aye.

CROM: Those of a contrary opinion, "Nay."

(Silence.)

Lieutenant Dangerfield, thou hast been pardoned by the Court and may go free.

(Cheers from soldiers. Charlton and Ralf shake hands.)

CAPELL: General Cromwell, I crave a word with you alone.

CROM: I hold no private converse with you, sir. If you have anything to say, speak now.

CAPELL: These bonds gall me. Give me a respite from them.

CROM: Guard, loose him.

CAPELL: (Stepping nearer to Crom.) I wish to know why it is you treat me with such severity.

CROM: Thou art a fellow and a traitor.

CAPELL: King Charles doth say the same of you. If I have offended you—so hath Lord Willoughby. Why is he not here?

CROM: My Lord honourably delivered himself unto the officers of Parliament. Thou tried to run away.

CAPELL: Nay, that is not the reason, sirs. It is because to those like unto me, who dares dispute his will, this Cromwell is a bitter persecutor.

CROM: Have a care; I would be merciful, but try me not too far.

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CAPELL: Do what you will. I shal' but laugh. I staked all upon a throw and lost. The wheel of fortune fools call the will of God gave one sharp turn and I was crushed, you saved. Yet even in this hour of triumph, Cromwell, fate hath you in her grasp.

STRICK: A truce to thy prating or I will strike thee down.

CAPELL: Strike, coward; I have no arms.

CROM: Let him be, good Colonel. I would all men should see him as he really is.

CAPELL: They shall see more than they reckon for. You sway an army, Cromwell, and some day would sway a nation. You see yourself a King, on a throne upheld by steel. But you're mistaken. Your hour hath come—die!

(Springs at Cromwell with a knife which he draws from secret pocket. Women shriek. Men rush forward. Cromwell catches Capell by the neck, holds him at arms' length and casts him backwards on the ground. Soldiers draw swords to kill him. Cromwell raises his hand.)

CROM: Wait. Nay, mother, I am not hurt the least. Capell, thou hast done the worst a man may do. I give thee to thy troop. (Growl from soldiers.) But first, this word: Think not you ever once deceived me by your smooth hypocrisy. I struck not before because I strike such men as you but once. Go—go unto your fate. May God, who judges all, have mercy on your soul.

(Turns away while Capell is dragged out. Then lays one hand on Ralf's shoulder, the other on Lord Charlton's, standing between them.)

I have now a word to say that concerns another man. Gentlemen, and you our enemies—nay, I will not use that word to-day—our noble friends who are fighting for the King. I call all to witness that I do hereby promote Lieutenant Dangerfield to be Captain of my first troop of horse.

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(Cheers from soldiers.)

And there is another thing that must be done. Presbyter Hepworth come hither.

(Hepworth, who has entered previously with Rachel, comes down C. Rachel stands with Ralf.)

Presbyter, once you did me a cruel wrong. God hath placed it within your power to make me reparation. Captain Dangerfield doth love your niece and seeks her hand in marriage. That hand she may not give to any one except by your consent. I call upon you now to give the bethrothal of these two your blessing, and thus wash out forever the remembrance of what you tried to do.

HEP: (Bowing his head in prayer and raising it.) Cromwell, you have conquered. Listen, all here present. I, like unto that miserable man who hath just gone to his account, did plan the ruin of the General. He would have hid my crime, but I will not have it hid. Before ye all I do declare that I, too, deserve to die. I have also done a bitter wrong to Captain Dangerfield. I crave his forgiveness.

RALF: Indeed you have it, sir.

HEP: Then, son, thou art a truer Christian than I. But unto Rachel, my niece, beloved of my soul, I have done the bitterest wrong of all.

RACHEL: Uncle, say no more. I would forget it all.

HEP: I shall not forget—and if I did God would not. But enough. Ralf Dangerfield, thy hand. Rachel, thine. General Cromwell, officers and soldiers of the Army of Parliament, as legal guardian of this maid I do give my full consent to her betrothal with this man. May the Almighty bless them both. And may He bestow on thee, General Cromwell, honour, happiness and a long life.

CHARL: Amen!

CROM: (Taking Rachel's and Ralf's hands from Hepworth. Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder.

ALL: Amen, Amen!

CURTAIN.

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